# *Connections*

# *Resource Guide*

## *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

**Instructions for Assembly of *Connections Resource Guide*:**

The Resource Guide is designed to be printed on two-sided paper and put in a three-hole binder. It has page numbers on alternating sides of the page, so once it has been downloaded, it should be duplicated two-sided on a copier. There are several blank pages that are necessary for proper positioning of sections—be sure to leave them in place when duplicating.

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# *Resource Guide*

## *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

Written by Dee Lindenberger/SAPE

This Resource Guide is part of a collaborative project between:

Michigan Department of Education

O'Neill Consulting

Michigan Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education (SAPE) Association

Calhoun Intermediate School District

Eaton Intermediate School District

Kent Intermediate School District

Macomb Intermediate School District

Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency

Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency

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*These materials were developed with federal funds allocated by the Michigan Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education.*

# Connections Resource Guide

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# Introduction

## What Is SAPE?

SAPE is an acronym for **S**trategic **A**lternatives in **P**revention **E**ducation. Created by an act of the Michigan State Legislature in 1971 under the name "Substance Abuse Prevention Education," SAPE provides outstanding leadership in Michigan and the U.S. by developing research-based programs related to substance abuse prevention, violence and bullying prevention, neuroscience-based learning, organizational change, student assistance/crisis response programs, and suspension and expulsion.

Numerous SAPE initiatives have been recognized as programs of excellence on the state and national levels, including formal recognition by the Michigan Association of School Boards, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, the National Rural Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control. SAPE is Michigan's most experienced network of professionals working together with youth, educators, parents, and community members to prevent high-risk behaviors through positive youth development. SAPE consultants are located at the following sites in Michigan:

**Calhoun Intermediate School District**
Guy Golomb (269) 781-5141

**Eaton Intermediate School District**
Charlotte Koger (517) 543-5500 x. 1161
Sara Lurie (517) 543-5500 x. 1111
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**Kent Intermediate School District**
John Belaski (616) 365-2270

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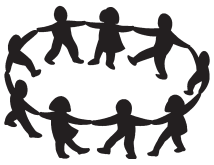
**Marquette-Alger Regional Educational Service Agency**
Dee Lindenberger (906) 226-5122

**Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency**
Kathy Gibson (734) 334-1608



## SAPE's Mission

The mission of SAPE is to promote the development of healthy, resilient children, schools, and communities through asset-building and collaborative partnerships that form a *circle of support* for our youth.

## Acknowledgments

This guidebook represents the cumulative wisdom and experience of the members of the Michigan SAPE Association. I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for their help in conceptualizing the ideas and strategies for this Resource Guide. While the development of this book was completed with the support of *all* the SAPE consultants, I would like to recognize the extraordinary amount of time and help provided by two people: Kathy Gibson and Étienne Senker.

***Kathy Gibson*** is an outstanding editor! She spent an enormous amount of time (often at home at night!) reading and rereading drafts—and provided *many* suggestions that helped to make this a better document. (I don't call her "Eagle Eye" for no reason!)

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Last, but definitely not least, "thank you" to my daughter ***Heather***, my "adopted son" ***Will Manty***, and *Senker* for supporting things on the home front during long hours in the office.

# Overview to Connections  Resource Guide

## *Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School*

**Key Question:** ***What's the purpose of this Resource Guide?***

> *Having hope is an essential part of one's social, emotional, and spiritual sustenance. It gives us strength to live and continually move forward, even when conditions seem hopeless.*
>
> *Blanstein and Guetzloe, 2000*

The *Connections Resource Guide: Enhanced Community Service and Strategies for Keeping Kids in School* is a "work in progress" that is funded by the Michigan Department of Education in accordance with Title IV No Child Left Behind. Its purpose is to support the efforts of school/community teams that are recipients of Community Service Grants, as well as anyone else looking for ways to keep kids connected to school. But, that's not its *real* purpose.

*Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's a way back for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.*

Its real purpose is to provide *hope*—hope for the students who are at risk of, or have been, suspended or expelled from school, *and* hope for the educators and community members who work with them. Students who are confronted with repeated suspensions or expulsion are often in such deep trouble in one or more areas of their lives that they are "disconnected" from school, from the people in their school, and from learning. They often have little hope that things will get better. When hope is lost, so too is a student's motivation and will to "continually move forward"—to make the behavioral, social, or academic changes that are needed in order for them to be successful in school and in life. Suspended and expelled students need to believe that things can be better. They need to believe there's *a way back* for them—a way to connect with school, the people in their school, and with learning.

Suspension and expulsion should be the last resorts educators use as strategies to motivate students to change their behavior. As educators, our hope for change tends to wane with each suspension a student serves, and is gone by the time a student is expelled. Expulsion represents the end of the line for a student's relationship with us and symbolizes to them the end of our belief that they can change.

At a point in time when students have little or no hope for their future as successful learners in school, we can share *our* belief that they are capable of making the necessary changes in their lives. Numerous longitudinal studies in resiliency have demonstrated the enormous impact that a caring relationship with an adult can have on a child—a relationship that instills a "sense of the possible" and the belief that the child can overcome obstacles. However, we can't give what we don't have, and so it is imperative, if we are to make a difference in the lives of

suspended and expelled students, that 1) we nurture within ourselves a steadfast sense of "the possible" for even our most challenging students, and 2) we have access to a broad repertoire of effective strategies that reach and teach students with problem behaviors, rather than just punish them.

Thus, the real purpose of this Resource Guide is to provide educators and community members with the *tools of hope*: a framework of understanding issues related to suspensions and expulsions, and a repertoire of research-based strategies and resources that will enable them to work effectively with at-risk students—while inspiring in them a "sense of the possible." Otherwise, why bother?

Following is an overview of the Resource Guide. It includes a "key question" that each section is designed to answer and a brief description of the content of the section:

## I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

**Key Question:** ***What characteristics and factors determine a student's level of risk for suspension and expulsion?***

There's a dynamic range of *risk and protective factors* at play that will make students more or less vulnerable to engaging in problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. When we have an understanding of the ways in which characteristics of the individual, family, school, and community interact and influence each other, we will have a wider lens through which to view students' problem behaviors. When we see a larger picture, we can better understand the function and intent of maladaptive behaviors. This allows us to make more informed choices about how to help students make changes that will help them meet their needs in a more pro-social way and become successful learners. Consequently, this section is devoted to building a framework of understanding regarding the characteristics and risk/protective factors in the following domains that play determining roles in student suspension and expulsion:

A. Family Domain
B. Individual Domain
C. School Domain
D. Community Domain

## II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: THE INTENT AND THE REALITY

**Key Question:** ***What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of their impact on students?***

This section focuses on the research regarding the overall effectiveness and impact of suspension and expulsion as a means of improving students' behavior and creating safer learning environments.

## III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

**Key Question:** ***How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?***

A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

B. Effective School Domain Strategies

*Structured Community Domain Strategies*

Community service is a means of providing ongoing structure and learning for students who are suspended or expelled. This section will present strategies that can help ensure successful implementation of community service projects for suspended and expelled students. There are a variety of transition services and resources that can help maximize the effectiveness of a student's community service experience, including procedures for the following: 1) selection of a compatible placement, 2) support for academics and their community service work (including use of mentors) while serving their suspension or expulsion, 3) facilitation of a reflection process that helps students learn from their experience and plan for needed behavioral and academic changes, and 4) connections to needed support services upon re-entry into school.

*Effective School Domain Strategies*

The learning and successful connections made through students' participation in a positive community service experience during suspension or expulsion can be enhanced when they return to a supportive and engaging school environment. The intent of the school-based strategies is to increase the chances of a successful reintegration into school following suspension or expulsion. A range of research-based strategies are presented that will help students make changes that will enable them to be successful learners, and inspire hope for both adults and students.

*The findings suggest that families, schools, churches, businesses, government, media, and other segments within the community must work together to address common concerns, share resources, and create a better world for our young people.*

*Benson, 1997*

## IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

**Key Question:** ***How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?***

Good intentions and a collection of specific strategies aren't enough. When looking for an effective strategy to prevent problem behaviors that lead to suspensions and expulsions, a growing body of research supports an approach that is systemic. Based upon the work of pioneers in the field of organizational change such as Peter Senge and Michael Fullan, this section will offer some strategies for initiating and maintaining an effective change process.

## V. RESOURCES

**Key Question:** ***What resources are available?***

This section provides a variety of resources to assist you in your continued learning, planning, and implementation of strategies.

A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books

B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:

1) SAPE Technical Support Consultants

2) Michigan Department of Education Project Director

3) Project Evaluator

C. Assessment and Planning Tools

D. Citations

# I. CHARACTERISTICS AND FACTORS RELATED TO SUSPENDED AND EXPELLED STUDENTS

**Key Question:** ***What characteristics and factors determine a student's level of risk for suspension and expulsion?***

> *Who are the students involved in [suspension] and expulsion? Through the examination of the characteristics of these students, [and the environments in which they live], we may come to understand the reasons for their misbehavior and the paths that bring them, over time, to commit serious school rule violations.*
>
> *G. Morrison, Anthony, Storino, Cheng, Furlong, and R. Morrison, 2001*

## Introduction to Risk and Protective Factors

"Risk factors" are characteristics or conditions that have been scientifically linked to an increase in a student's level of risk for problem behaviors (e.g., chemical use, aggression/violence, vandalism, truancy, academic failure). Those that decrease a student's vulnerability are "protective factors." Literally hundreds of cross-cultural, longitudinal studies spanning as long as fifty years have demonstrated the powerful effect these factors can have in buffering the negative impact of adversity (Werner, 1989; Rutter, 1985). The research of Emmy Werner remains the seminal work regarding the capacity for people to "spring back" from severe stress and trauma as a result of protective factors. This capacity to "successfully adapt in the face of adversity" and go on to "develop social, academic, and vocational competence…" is known as resiliency (Henderson, 1996).

It is important to remember in our dealing with students that they possess both risk and protective factors, and because of that, there is no *one* factor that can predict problem behaviors that are related to suspension and expulsion. Rather, there are a number of relevant characteristics in the *individual* and *environmental* domains of a student's life that are continually interacting. Ultimately, it is the *balance* of risk and protective factors that determines a student's level of risk at any point in time.

*No one is invulnerable; every person has a "threshold" beyond which he or she can "succomb."*
*Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1979*

> *Family background, personal characteristics of the child, the school context and the social behavior of children interact to create conditions that place children at risk of failing to achieve their academic potential, dropping out of school, and/or having limits placed on their ability to function as productive adults in society.*
>
> *Boyd, 1992*

The number and intensity of risk and protective factors in a student's life can shift with changing circumstances—a divorce in the family, death of a friend, rejection or harassment by peers. Simply making the transition from middle

to high school tends to be a time of increased risk for students, a reality that is reflected by the fact that 14 is the most common age for expulsions in Michigan schools (Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2002). "No one is invulnerable; every person has a 'threshold' beyond which he or she can 'succumb'" (Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1979).

A note of caution regarding *risk factors*: We need to be able to identify students who are at increased risk and provide them with support. However, there is an inherent danger of an identified risk factor becoming a "label." A student's label tends to negatively skew how we view them and limits our ability to see their strengths and potential. Labeling a student is, in effect, an additional risk factor. So, while we will discuss risk factors that are related to suspension and expulsion, bear in mind that the purpose is to provide a *context for understanding* problem behaviors and to help *identify appropriate support services*. Our task is to *counterbalance* identified risk factors, "either by decreasing the exposure to risk factors and stressful life events, or by increasing the number of available protective factors…in the lives of vulnerable children" (Werner, 1990).

Just as there is no one characteristic that can predict problem behaviors, there is no single profile of risk factors for students who are suspended or expelled. This is due, in part, to the fact that there is a wide range of infractions that can result in suspension or expulsion (e.g., truancy; disobedience; reckless driving on campus; profanity; alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use; fighting or assaults; verbal threats; weapons). There are, however, some recurring environmental and individual characteristics among students engaged in problem behaviors. The characteristics and factors of the various domains (Family, Individual, School, and Community) described below are particularly relevant to students who have *multiple infractions* as opposed to those who have a one-time offense that is atypical of their normal behavior.

*Antisocial behavior is the "recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior"*

*Simcha-Fagen et al., 1975*

Antisocial behavior is one of the most common factors that is related to suspension and expulsion. It is defined as "recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior" (Simcha-Fagen et al., 1975). Antisocial behaviors include a broad spectrum of behaviors, ranging from physical violence and entrenched patterns of opposition to minor forms of disrespect and disobedience.

> *[Antisocial behavior] is characterized by forms of hostility, including "aggression, a willingness to commit rule infractions, defiance of adult authority, and violation of the social norms of society....In a very real sense, antisocial behavior is about aggression. Aggressive behavior can be expressed in physical, gestural, and verbal forms…" (Walker, 1995). [It is also characterized by] being unruly, stealing, or lying….*
>
> *Mcevoy and Welker, 2000*

Based upon a review of state and national literature, that definition of antisocial behavior is relevant to the majority of behaviors that result in suspension

or expulsion, particularly of those students who have multiple infractions (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003; Skiba and Reece, 1999).

## Characteristics and Risk/Protective Factors in Domains

There are four "domains" in a student's life that play a role in determining a student's risk for behaviors related to suspension and expulsion:

A. Family Domain

B. Individual Domain

C. School Domain

D. Community Domain

Characteristics and risk/protective factors in each of those domains will be presented, along with a "causal model" that illustrates how the interplay of cumulative risk factors across domains is part of a predictable path of escalating antisocial behaviors. In addition to the protective factors and suggestions provided within each of the domain sections, a comprehensive list of strategies that serve as countervailing forces" will be provided in Section III (*From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*).

# A. Family Domain: Characteristics and Factors

*Thus the path to delinquency, criminality, and ultimately prison begins for many individuals very early in their lives. It starts with the early acquisition of an antisocial behavior pattern within the home and family that is often well developed prior to entering school….This is a highly predictable path….*

*Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995*

**Families, Stress, and Antisocial Behavior**

While antisocial behavior can be the result of physical or neurological injury, such as brain trauma, there is a substantial amount of research showing a consistent association with family dysfunction and pathology (Rutter, Giller, and Hagell, 1998; Walker et al., 1995; Patterson, Reid, and Dishion, 1992; Olweus, 1993). Families can be "aggression-generating systems" that in effect *teach* and promote antisocial behavior among their members (Olweus, 1993). It is important to understand the characteristics of these families for two reasons:

1) it will prepare us to work more effectively with both the students and parents in those families, and

2) the same characteristics that exemplify "aggression-generating" family systems apply to schools. Schools can be aggression-generating systems as well.

*Repeated office referrals are associated...with higher levels of family conflict.*

*Morrison et al.,, 2001*

Antisocial behavior is the "single best predictor of delinquency in adolescence" (Walker, 1995)—and along with delinquent behavior comes suspension and expulsion. This is supported by the fact that the majority of *expulsions* in Michigan are the result of aggressive behavior: 38% for physical assaults/ fighting, 16% for infractions involving weapons, 15% for verbal assaults, 4% for bomb threats, and 1% each for vandalism, arson, and theft (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

Walker and his colleagues conducted a longitudinal study that followed two cohorts of fourth-grade boys. One group scored high on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior; the other group scored low and was considered to be "at minimal risk" for such behaviors. Students having high scores on scales of aggression and antisocial behavior at fourth grade had a dropout rate of 62% compared to 12% in the control group (1995). Established patterns of antisocial behavior can even be accurately identified by 3 or 4 years of age.

What do we know about family systems that predictably produce children who can be identified as "antisocial" by such an early age? There are a number of factors that can create a chronic state of stress and dysfunction in families.

Following are five major stressors that can trigger dysfunction:

***1) Criminal Activity of Parents***

Children whose parents have criminal records have a greater chance of delinquency and criminal activity themselves. A longitudinal study of 350 children found that 37% of boys having fathers with a criminal record became delinquent by the age of 18 compared to 8% of boys whose fathers had no criminal record (Walker et al., 1995).

***2) Substance Abusing Parents***

*The evidence demonstrating that a school can serve as a "protective shield to help children withstand the multiple vicissitudes that they can expect of a stressful world" abounds, whether it is coming from a family environment devastated by alcoholism or mental illness or from a poverty-stricken community environment, or both (Garmezy, 1991).*
*Benard, 1992*

Parents with drug and alcohol problems pass on a harsh legacy for their children. The abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional), neglect, and general family dysfunction that are related to parental substance abuse have long been documented in the literature. They are reflected in a wide range of children's problem behaviors, including higher rates of juvenile delinquency, mental illness, suicide, and teenage marriages (Wegscheider, 1989). Each of these behaviors increases the likelihood of school failure by dropping out, suspension, or expulsion.

***3) Teenage Parents***

Children of teenage parents are at elevated risk for antisocial behavior and related school problems as they grow up, as a result of stressors their young parents are likely to encounter (e.g., curtailed education, poverty, being on welfare, lack of support from a partner, and lack of adequate coping and parenting skills). The child's risk is particularly high if the teen mother was under the age of eighteen at the time of their birth. Another consideration regarding teenage parents is the potential for the single mother (or father) to be involved in relationships with a number of different partners. The disruptions and inconsistency that are part of repeated separations or changes in caregivers are substantial risk factors for antisocial behavior. The Dunedin study identified it as the "strongest of all family predictors" (Henry et al., 1993). The same cycle of repeated separations and changes in caregivers can occur with divorce and broken homes, and will have a similar impact on the children.

***4) Poverty***

Delinquency is associated with social disadvantage and poverty (Bolger et al., 1995). A study by Nichols (1999) indicates this is particularly true of African Americans: "…individual poverty impacts African Americans but not European Americans." A longitudinal study of 378 families looked at the effects of economic stress on family members. The findings indicate that the effect on antisocial behavior is *indirectly* related to poverty. In other words, it's not "poverty" per se that is related to antisocial behavior; it is the risk factors that can result from poverty, such as "parental depression, marital conflict, and parental hostility" (Rutter and Giller, 1983). Michigan students who have been expelled are almost 2.5 times as likely as the general student population to be

living at less than 100% of the federal poverty level (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

It is interesting to note that while socioeconomic differences *are* a risk factor for inadequate parenting and antisocial behavior in the United States and England, they are *not* a risk factor in Norway and Sweden. Dan Olweus attributes that to the fact that there are greater inequalities in socioeconomic conditions among families in the United States and England (1993).

*Students carry the stress that they may be feeling at home to the school context, where their distress is reflected through misbehavior.*
*Morrison et al., 2001*

***5) Homelessness***

Students who are homeless confront a myriad of problems that elevate their risk for problem behaviors. Whether students are homeless because their families are without housing, or they are homeless because they have left their families, the result is the same: the very core of their sense of security is unstable and life is unpredictable. The unstable conditions in which they live affect their ability to consistently meet even the most basic human needs for safety, shelter, and food. Students whose families are homeless are often fatigued from caring for younger siblings and are unprepared for school because they don't have a quiet place to do their homework. Transportation problems contribute to attendance problems in school. In addition, students may be also dealing with chronic stressors related to family dysfunction, such as alcoholism/drug addiction, abuse, or poverty (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994).

All of the above stressors are directly or indirectly related to antisocial behavior. Given the right circumstances, other sources of family stress could also promote the development of antisocial behavior patterns (e.g., divorce, unemployment, death, mental illness). Simply being a child in a family "having over four children" is correlated with antisocial behavior if the parents don't have adequate resources (Rutter et al., 1983). *All* families experience stressors over the course of time. There are two critical questions that will determine the impact on family members:

1) *How long* has the family been in a stressed state?

2) *How capable* is the family of coping with the stress?

The risk level for family dysfunction and children's problem behaviors increases if the stress becomes *chronic* (particularly if there's a *cumulative effect* with multiple stressors over time). The risk increases further if the parents' *skill level to cope is inadequate*.

While the specific stressors in families may vary, researchers have identified the following shared characteristics that promote antisocial behavior (Olweus, 1993; Rutter et al., 1983; Patterson et al., 1992; Walker et al., 1995).

**Family Risk Factors**

***1. Poor Emotional Connection and Bonding***

Relationships are characterized by *low levels of emotional attachment* and bonding. There is a *lack of warmth and positive attention*. Parents *aren't involved* in their children's day-to-day lives and *don't participate in positive activities* together. The relationships are *unstable* and characterized by *conflict and coercion*. *Aggression* is an accepted norm.

***2. Lack of Clear Limits and Consequences***

There is a *lack of clear and fair rules* that are *consistently upheld*. Limits and consequences are *unpredictable* and *inconsistent*—and *unrelated to the logic* of the child's actual behavior. Rather, the parents' response is based upon their mood and disposition at the time of the infraction. A rule that is enforced with physical punishment one day might go completely unnoticed another day. Because the parents are not involved in their children's daily activities, they *don't do a good job of monitoring or supervising* their behavior. The resulting lack of consistency is exacerbated by the unpredictability of a generally *overly permissive* discipline style that is periodically interrupted by *overly punitive* consequences. Thus, the children grow up not knowing exactly where "the line" of acceptable behavior is or what will happen if they "cross the line."

***3. Harsh Disciplinary Practices***

Parents of antisocial children tend to use disciplinary practices that are characterized by *hostility* and *explosive outbursts of emotion*. Consequences are designed to punish and control, rather than to teach. Consequences are overly punitive and out of proportion to the seriousness of the violation. They tend to be enforced with expression of anger or frustration. "A…factor that has been found to raise the child's level of aggression is the parents' use of '*power-assertive' child-rearing methods* such as physical punishment and violent emotional outbursts. This finding supports the notion that 'violence begets violence'" (Olweus, 1993).

Families having the above characteristics are "aggression-generating" systems and they are likely to produce children who exhibit the following traits and behaviors: hostility, bullying/harassment, intimidation, defiance of adult authority, rule infractions, and disrespect for the mores of school and the community. These antisocial patterns are learned by a very early age, and they leave children ill-prepared to be successful when they come to school.

> *Children learn what's modeled for them. A child who consistently receives negative responses to social and emotional encounters with their primary caregiver(s) learns that people cannot be relied upon, and he/she ultimately disconnects. In an abusive environment, they learn that the way to get their needs met is to be aggressive and/or violent.*
>
> *Jensen, 2000*

It is important to remember that a student's risk level for problem behavior could suddenly spike as a result of an unexpected crisis in their life: a divorce, death, loss of family income, teenage pregnancy—any of these things will create stress that could be reflected in a student's behavior in school.

*To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.*

*Note*: The term "dysfunctional" family system is used in this document with reservation because it is inaccurate and often carries judgmental implications of parental failure and blame. Families that are described as "dysfunctional" are *not* actually dysfunctional. They do, in fact, *function*—they simply function in a highly stressed, survival mode. And, the parents have neither failed nor do they deserve blame—they are simply doing the best they can given the knowledge and skills they have. To the degree to which parents are viewed through eyes of judgment or blame, our effectiveness to help and support them, and their children, will diminish.

Perhaps a more useful way to view parents and families is through the lens of "gifts and missing pieces," a term coined by Charles King, a school counselor from Minnesota. All individuals and all families have gifts and missing pieces. *Gifts* represent knowledge and skills we have gained that help us live as competent and well-socialized individuals in our society. Having the "skill to resolve conflicts" is an example of a gift. *Missing pieces* are the things we haven't yet learned. The "lack of skills to manage anger" is an example of a missing piece. Some families have more missing pieces than gifts. The fact that parents do not teach their children effective skills to manage their anger does not mean they do not care or want the best for their children. We cannot give what we do not have, and we cannot teach what we do not know.

When we look at people and families in terms of gifts and missing pieces, we help free them from the limitations of a self-fulfilling perspective that can keep them, and us, stuck. We will become more adept at seeing, and being able to build upon, their innate strengths and resilience.

# B. Individual Domain: Characteristics and Factors

> *Research findings have made it abundantly clear that there are individual characteristics that influence liability to antisocial behavior.*
>
> *Rutter et al., 1998*

The characteristics and factors within the Individual Domain are related to a student's biology, mental health, skills, and behaviors. (See page Figure 1.) Depending upon whether they help or hinder healthy youth development, they will function either as risk or protective factor. They are described below as risk factors.

### *1. Biological Predisposition*

*In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan.*
*Michigan Public Policy Iitiative, 2003*

Students can come into the world with a cognitive or neurological deficit that predisposes them to problem behaviors by virtue of a variety of disabilities: developmental disorders such as autism and Asperger's syndrome, learning disabilities (LD), ADHD, Fetal Alcohol (FAS/FAE), brain trauma, and chemical dysregulation (Jensen, 2000). The relationship between antisocial behavior and the following characteristics has been well-researched and indicates the likelihood of "biological substrates": cognitive impairment (e.g., verbal and planning skills), temperamental features (e.g., impulsivity, sensation-seeking, aggressiveness, "hot-headedness"), and impaired processing of social information (e.g., misreading social cues and perceiving negative intentions in other's behavior) (Rutter et al., 1998).

A variety of biological/neurological visual problems can also underlie school failure and problem behavior. It should be noted that "vision is much more than sight or how clearly we see….It is the total ability to organize light input and recognize spatial relationships between things and to build an internal representation of reality" (Harris, in press). There is an alarming percentage of incarcerated youth and special education students who have visual problems, many of them undiagnosed. Over 98 percent of juvenile delinquents living in a detention facility were found to have significant visual impairments (Harris, 1989). In another study, depending upon the specific visual ability being measured, up to 96 percent of special education students had a visual problem (Richards, Oppenheim, and Getman, n.d.). Because many of these visual conditions have to do with how the eyes work together and how they communicate with the brain, they will not be detected in traditional eye exams. Many can be corrected with vision therapy, but an eye exam must be conducted by a "developmental optometrist" to properly diagnose and prescribe treatment.

*It's important to note that none of these factors alone predestine a student to behaviors that lead to suspension or expulsion.* "Genetic factors are influential… They do not cause antisocial behavior directly; rather, they constitute one set of influences operating in probabilistic fashion as part of multifactorial causation" (Rutter et al., 1998). Much depends upon the complex interactions of these

factors with the characteristics of the home and school environments, as well as availability of effective community support services.

In spite of the fact that very few special needs students represent a serious danger to students or staff (Morrison and D'Incau, 2000), they are disproportionately expelled in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan (2002), 71% of the students referred to the agency for expulsions were "special needs" students, with 19.6% being special education certified or receiving legal protections. A biological predisposition makes students more vulnerable to risk factors in their environments. This reinforces the need to provide school environments that are rich in protective factors that will help counter-balance their biological risk factors.

***2. Lack of Connectedness and Bonding to School***

Walker et al., (1983) conceptualize "bonds" as being comprised of three elements: 1) *attachment*: having a positive emotional connection toward people; 2) *commitment*: having an investment in the "social unit"; and 3) *belief*: meaning sharing in the values of that social unit. In this case, the "social unit" would be the school. Students who are suspended or expelled tend to be *disconnected*:

1) They are *disconnected from people* in school. They tend to lack positive emotional attachments to teachers and administrators as a result of years of conflictive disciplinary relationships. Frequently, they have also experienced rejection by the mainstream of students.

2) They are *disconnected from a commitment to school* as a social unit. Their level of involvement in activities where they can contribute or have a "voice" —or in any sort of extra curricular activities, is very low (Morrison and D'Incau, 1997).

*One of the strongest motivations for breaking rules is to fight against a system that diminishes self-worth and importance.*
*Curwin, 1992*

3) They are *disconnected from the primary value of school*: *learning*. As noted above, one of the most common characteristics of suspended and expelled students is academic failure. "Students who fall significantly behind in school may have difficulty staying connected to school both academically and socially" (Wehlag et al., 1989). Students who experience academic failure are not likely to value learning. Having parents who don't place a high value on education, which is often the case for students with a history of school failure, further disconnects students from learning and the school as a whole.

A student's "disconnection" can manifest itself directly, in the form of aggressive or defiant antisocial behavior. Or, it can be manifested indirectly, through behaviors such as lack of attention or participation in classes, tardiness, or truancy. Either way, it is a factor on a causal pathway that frequently leads to suspension or expulsion.

### *3. Problems with Authority and Limits*

> *Kids with serious behavioral problems…have trouble accepting authority, [and] following the general kinds of rules you need in any community….They're resistant to conforming.*
>
> *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*

Although, problems dealing with authority and behavioral limits could be related to a situation-specific stressor (e.g., divorce, death, peer problems), when it is an established *behavioral pattern*, it is likely rooted in having grown up in an aggression-generating family system, as described above. Anti-authority problems are characterized by a disrespect and stubborn defiance of authority and rules—often the direct result of family dysfunction. In its less serious forms, this pattern of behavior may be simply a "learned" behavior that is the result of *modeling* in the dysfunctional family system. It could also have a biological component with links to ADD and mood disorders, and dysfunctional serotonin systems (Jensen, 2000). In more serious cases, it can be related to Oppositional Disorder—a condition that has been steadily increasing in school age populations. (Approximately 40 to 50 percent of ADD sufferers also develop Oppositional Disorder.) Still more severe anti-authority problems could indicate Conduct Disorder, an extremely serious condition that requires referral to professional help. If not identified early and addressed, Oppositional Disorder can develop into Conduct Disorder, a diagnosis that is strongly correlated with future criminal involvement (Jensen, Fragile Brain Training, 2000). According to Jensen, students exhibiting these types of disruptive conditions, when compared to others, "have the worst academic performance records, the poorest relationships, and the weakest self-management skills (taking responsibility, planning, controlling anger, and being punctual)." This indicates the need for an effective process within schools for early identification and referral to appropriate support services.

*What is the school...norm? Is it about homophobia, or fear or hatred of anyone who is different (xenophobia)? Is it about the school making it okay to belittle others—a hands-off, "there's nothing we can do about it" approach to children's interactions...?*

*Garbarino and deLara, 2002*

### *4. Mental Health Issues*

There are a number of mental health problems associated with suspension and expulsion. Based on statistics from the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 51.6% of expelled students "exhibited identifiable risk factors prior to expulsion. These risk factors included emotional problems such as depression, suicidal ideation, anger, impulsivity…previous trauma, and victimization by other students. Although these students had exhibited risk factors prior to expulsion, school systems had failed to provide consistent referrals for evaluation or appropriate follow-up services for these students" (2002). It is alarming that Michigan students who have *identifiable* mental health-related risk factors *prior to* their removal from school are expelled at a "significantly higher" rate than national norms.

### *5. Perceived Lack of Safety in School*

Students need to have confidence that a standard of safety will be upheld in school for all students. Although the lack of a perception of safety in school affects *all* students, it represents more of a risk factor for two groups of students, and it will affect each of the groups differently. The degree to which an individual in either of these groups perceives a lack of safety, the risk to engage in antisocial behavior will increase.

1) *Students who bully and harass:* These students are opportunists. They engage in intimidating behaviors that threaten the emotional or physical safety of other students when they believe they can "get away with it." When they perceive lax enforcement of limits and consequences to deter antisocial behavior in school, they are more likely to interpret that as a license to proceed. They rely on a lack of the school's ability or willingness to ensure the safety of their targets.

2) *Targets of bullying and harassment:* These students live in *fear*—fear of being ridiculed, coerced, humiliated in front of friends, or physically hurt. (It's interesting to note that "humiliation" was identified as a "child's worst fear" in a study conducted by Kaoru Yamamoto, at the University of Colorado—they are afraid of "being laughed at" or "losing face.") "Fear of other students is the reason reported by one of every 12 students for dropping out of school" (Greenbaum and Turner, 1989). At one end of the spectrum, a target's feelings of lack of safety might be related to truancy and poor grades. On the other end of the spectrum, those feelings may result in aggression, as targeted students attempt to defend themselves or seek revenge. Recent school shootings are an extreme example of this type of behavior.

*The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs.*

*We do not need more restrictive laws. Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors.*

*Darrell Scott, father of Colombine shooting victim, Rachel Scott*

### *6. Involvement in High-Risk Behaviors*

Of all the high-risk behaviors a student could be involved with, chemical use is one of the most common that can lead to suspension or expulsion. Removal from school could happen either as a *direct* result of their use, possession, or distribution, or as an *indirect* result of their involvement, (e.g., aggression, truancy, academic failure). The earlier the age of onset of use, the higher the risk for problem behaviors (Development Services Group, 2002). Other high-risk behaviors that can directly or indirectly result in removal from school include gambling, teen sex, working more than 10 hours per week (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994), and associating with negative peer groups.

### *7. Inadequate Social and Coping Skills*

> *Antisocial youth often do not display age-appropriate social behavior; they tend to be extremely immature in almost all of their social interactions with peers and adults in school. [They] consistently fail in their social relations with other children, youth, and adults (Parker and Asher, 1987).*
>
> *Walker et al., 1995*

According to the findings from the National Survey of American Families, students expelled from Michigan schools were 12 times more likely to "frequently" have trouble getting along with others (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). The lack of effective social and coping skills is particularly evident among the large percentage of suspended and expelled students who have special needs. Many neurological disabilities and mental health problems are characterized by social deficits. For example, in spite of a pro-social intent among students with ADHD and LD, they "experience significant peer problems and social failure" (Marray as cited in Keilitz and Dunivant, 1986).

*...schools with low levels of problems like delinquency...created a variety of opportunities to ensure that all kids found something they were interested in and could succeed in. "If you bring children in for a variety of things and give them multiple opportunities for success...it's less likely that you get [an] anti-academic atmosphere" and alienation…*
*Benard, 1992 citing Rutter, 1984*

Students who bully and harass rely on the use of aggression, threats, intimidation, manipulation, and coercion in relationships with their peers and adults alike. They are further handicapped socially due to their tendency to misinterpret others' behaviors and misattribute hostile intent—a bias that *could* be based in a personal reality if they, themselves, have been a target of aggression and hostility (Rutter et al., 1998). It is critical not to reinforce that perception with punitive consequences or aggressive interactions when disciplining students.

### *8. Lack of Participation in Constructive Activities*

> *The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to social institutions like the family, the school, and the community, a process that has consistently been identified...as a major risk factor for involvement in alcohol and other drugs, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school failure, and depression and suicide.*
>
> *Benard, 1992*

Students who are alienated and involved with problem behavior tend to feel like they "don't belong" in school and are unlikely to be involved in extracurricular activities. They frequently don't participate in community-based activities either. The research conducted by Search Institute highlights the importance of youth engaging in structured and meaningful activities because they bring them into contact with "principled and caring adults who nurture skill and capacity through group activities, lessons, relationships, and supervision" (Benson, 1992). Benson also notes that these activities are even more important for those students with "absent, neglectful, overwhelmed, or underskilled families." For those students, the opportunities for participation in constructive activities and connections with positive role models can make the critical difference in the course of their lives.

***9. Low Academic Achievement***

One of the strongest, single risk factors for suspension and expulsion is low academic achievement. Across studies and irrespective of the precipitating event, the one common red flag is that students who have been removed from school tend to have performed well below average both in terms of grade level and achievement scores. The grade point average for English and Math courses is a key indicator, with the bulk of students recommended for suspension and expulsion having a D+ average (Morrison et al., 2001). Academic failure is a correlate of "low commitment to school," a well-researched risk factor for a number of high-risk behaviors in the work of Hawkins and Catalano (1992).

***10. Poor Attendance/Truancy***

According to the National Survey of American Families (1997/1999), students expelled from Michigan schools were 4 times as likely to have a history of skipping school as other students. Numerous studies indicate that truancy is one of the most significant factors related to delinquency (Rutter et al., 1998).

***11. Disciplinary History of Suspension and Expulsion***

> *Students who are not educated in the classroom are educated on the streets. There is a direct correlation between suspensions/expulsions and delinquency rates.*
>
> *McDonald Brown and Birrane, 1994*

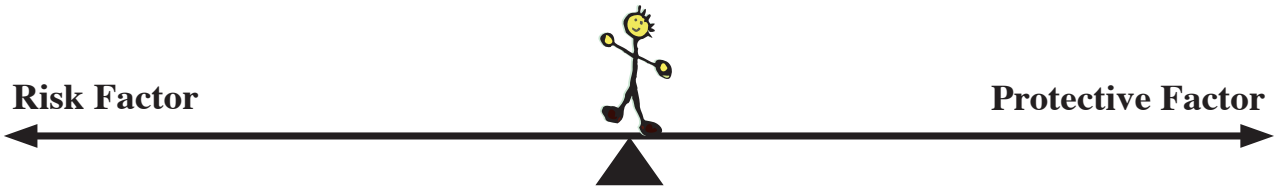
Removal from school through suspension or expulsion has been found to be a risk factor in and of itself, increasing the likelihood of continued and escalating antisocial behaviors that will ultimately result in involvement with the juvenile court system. "It has been shown that one adjudicated event (i.e., school removal), leads to additional adjudicated events (juvenile justice records)" (Clark et al., 2003).

> *A behavioral trajectory characterized by student involvement in multiple offenses that lead to suspensions is associated with a "hardening" of social sensitivity on the part of the students.*
>
> *Morrison et al., 2001*

Students who have been suspended are three times more likely to drop out of school (Skiba et al., 1999). Suspension and expulsion also increase the risk of teenage pregnancy and parenting, with a 95% increased risk of pregnancy for girls, and 178% increased risk of parenting for boys (Clark et al., 2003).

*Note*: The assumption is made that no student is suspended or expelled without a legitimate rule infraction, and therefore has responsibility for their misbehavior. However, in cases where schools overly rely upon their use as a disciplinary consequence, "suspension and expulsion" is a "school" risk factor as much as it is an "individual" risk factor.

# *Figure 1:* Individual Domain Risk and Protective Factors




**Biolology**
*Do they have any cognitive or neurological impairments or predispositions?*

**Connectedness and Bonding to School**
*Do they feel connected and like they "belong" in school?*

**Ability to Cope with Authority and Limits**
*How well to they deal with authority figures and abide with school rules and regulations?*

**Perception of Safety in School**
*Are they involved in bullying/harassment behaviors, either as "bullies" or as "targets"?*

**Status of Mental Health**
*Do they have any emotional problems (e.g., depression, trauma, suicide ideation, stress disorder)?*

**Level of Involvement in High-Risk Behaviors**
*Are they involved with the use of alcohol/other drugs, or other high-risk behaviors (e.g., gambling, teen sex/parenting, homeless)*

**Competency with Social and Coping Skills**
*What is their level of competency with social/coping skills (e.g., ability to deal with stress, anger, loss)?*

**Level of Participation in Constructive and Meaningful Activities**
*What is their level of participation in constructive and meaningful activities in school and community?*

**Academic Achievement**
*How successful are they academically?*

**Attendance in School**
*Do their records indicate truancy or good attendance in school?*

**Disciplinary History**
*Do they have a history of disciplinary interventions, including suspension or expulsion?*

# C. School Domain: Characteristics and Factors

> *Expulsion is a process, not merely an event….Child characteristics interact with school discipline philosophy to create differential outcomes for students with behavioral challenges.…School characteristics need to be considered in the understanding of how a student comes to a school expulsion event….A school's environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior.*
>
> *Morrison et al., 2001*

A school can be characterized by the same risk factors as those identified in aggression-promoting family systems. To the degree that a school possesses those risk factors, it too, will be a stressful and aggression-generating system:

- lack of warmth and positive relationships,
- lack of clear limits and consequences,
- use of harsh and inconsistent disciplinary practices, and
- lack of adequate social and coping skills (Olweus, 1993).

*[In order] to be effective, a disciplinary code must begin with an objective and discernable set of rules which are consistently applied.*

*McDonald Brown et al., 1994*

Olweus also identified the following "group mechanisms" that intensify the impact of the above risk factors and increase levels of antisocial behaviors, even among students who would not generally engage in those behaviors (1993):

## Group Mechanisms that Promote Antisocial Behavior

### *Social Contagion*

Studies have shown that both children and adults behave more aggressively as a result of observing someone else behave aggressively, particularly if that person is held in high regard. Over time, aggression will be seen as *the norm* if clear limits and consequences are not employed in response to antisocial behavior.

### *Weakening of Inhibitions*

When students observe aggression (or other antisocial behavior) being "rewarded," there tends to be a decrease in their own inhibitions toward aggression, making it more likely they'll engage in a similar behavior. A reward could take a variety of forms, including increased image of power and prestige, getting attention from peers, or materially gaining from theft or coercion. Simply getting away without a consequence rewards the behavior. Conversely, when students see a person get a negative consequence for behaving aggressively, their own internal controls against that behavior are strengthened.

### *Diffusion*

When an individual is part of a group that is engaged in antisocial behavior, there is a *decreased* sense of individual responsibility, and they are more likely to participate in the behavior than if they were alone. They also experience fewer feelings of guilt or remorse afterward if they were part of a group.

## The Causal Model of Antisocial Behavior

Patterson's Causal Model (1992) describes what is recognized as the "most complete and detailed explanation of the causal events and processes that account for the development and escalation of antisocial behavior." The chain of causal events begins with the family system. As previously noted, chronic family stressors can result in chaotic and destructive parenting patterns. These family systems are prone to producing children with well-established antisocial behavioral patterns by the time they enter school.

> *If a young child brings an antisocial pattern to school…he or she has severely elevated risk status for rejection by both peers and teachers. Peer and teacher rejection, in turn, is associated with academic failure, and the child is increasingly isolated. Because of this rejection and social isolation, the antisocial child seeks out others who share the same status, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics.*
>
> *Walker et al., 1995*

*Thus, internal factors, which may be structural, contextual, climate-related, and/or individualized, cause certain at-risk students to view school as an unwelcoming place, and they become alienated.*

*Jordan, Lara, McPartland, 1994*

In other words, if students exhibiting problem behaviors are unable to develop a bond with their peers or their teachers, they are likely to join a negative peer group. Once students gain affiliation with a "deviant" peer group having shared attitudes and behaviors, their level of risk for engaging in increasingly delinquent behaviors is significantly higher. "Seventy percent of those children have their first felony arrest within two years of becoming a fully enfranchised member of this deviant peer group….This is a highly predictable path" (Walker et al., 1995).

As reliable as Patterson's model is in predicting serious problems with delinquency that result in expulsion and entry into the judicial system, enough is known about effective school-based strategies and the power of protective factors to interrupt that pattern. Entry into school is a crossroads for these students. Things will either get better, or they'll get worse—depending on the balance of risk and protective factors in the school.

## Positive Characteristics and Protective Factors of School

For students coming to school from chronically stressed family backgrounds, their risk for suspension and expulsion will be significantly higher as a result of the *compounding effect* of the school's risk factors interacting with their family and individual risk factors. Conversely, schools that are rich in the above environmental protective factors can literally change the entire trajectory of a student's life.

The ground breaking research of Dan Olweus (1993) has demonstrated that if environmental risk factors are *inverted* into positive characteristics, they act as "countervailing forces" that buffer students from the negative impact of family risk factors.

> *There are certain aggression-generating factors (i.e., poor childhood conditions, certain forms of child rearing, and family problems). The degree to which a school's students will manifest [antisocial behavior] is not only dependent on the amount of aggression-generating factors…. It is also largely contingent on the strength of countervailing forces. The attitudes, routines, and behaviors of the school personnel…are decisive factors in preventing and controlling…as well as in redirecting such behaviors into more socially acceptable channels.*
>
> *Olweus, 1993*

Following is an *inverted* version of the major school environmental risk factors. In their positive form, they are protective factors. These factors are consistently identified in the research on effective schools, prevention, positive youth development, and resiliency (Henderson et al., 1996; Olweus, 1993; Davis, 2003; Rutter et al., 1998; Walker et al., 1995; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995 and 2001; Search Institute 2003). As protective factors, they will help counter-balance students' risk factors:

***1. Emotional Connection and Bonding***

> *Students feel a greater sense of engagement, belonging, and personal value when their classmates and teachers get to know them. Acting out decreases as informal structures replace rules.*
>
> *McRobbie, 2001 citing Gregory, 2000*

*The curriculum and the environment in most schools represents a mainstream point of view....This can be alienating and discouraging to students of minority cultures.*

*Thompson, 1991*

There is a sense of connection and bonding both with the school and the people in the school that results in large part from the quality of relationships and level of personalization a school is able to establish. Relationships in the school are characterized by *warmth and positive interactions* between students and their peers, as well as between students and staff, including the administrator. The principal takes a "visible and supportive role…talking informally with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990). School staff *model respect* in their relationships with students, avoiding the use of sarcasm, intimidation, or anger to manage students' behavior. Students are given ample *positive attention* by staff; they acknowledge positive behavior and do things with students that are mutually enjoyable.

There is a *sense of community*, where students feel as though they *belong*. The bonds of community reach out to include students having special needs and minority students. Staff and students are provided opportunities to increase their awareness and acceptance of cultural differences.

Students have *input into decision-making* where appropriate, and have opportunities to make *meaningful contributions*. There are ample *opportunities for student involvement* in school activities (e.g., special interest clubs, peer helping, service learning or community service), including opportunities for students who are *not* athletes or traditional student leaders.

***2. Clear Limits and Consequences***

*Behavioral limits and consequences are clearly articulated*—known to all students and upheld by all staff. Research supports the use of student input and participation in the development of school rules and disciplinary practices, noting that it "creates a sense of ownership and belongingness" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001).

*Consequences are predictable and consistently applied.* A study conducted to assess rates of bullying indicated that while a bullying incident occurred once every seven minutes, adults intervened only four percent of the time (Craig and Pepler, 1997). While this study was related to bullying at the elementary level, the point it makes is valid for any antisocial behavior at any grade level: When adults do not intervene, students perceive it as a lack of behavioral limits and consequences. This translates as tacit permission to engage in those behaviors.

The *consequences are consistently applied* to all students. Students will not perceive "consistent" if some students are seen to be "above the law" while others receive more frequent or more punitive consequences. Students see inconsistent treatment as unfair, and respond with feelings of resentment and lack of respect for authority. When all students are held accountable for their behavior and treated equitably, irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, status, or behavioral "reputation," it promotes respect for the limits and trust in the people who enforce those limits. Clearly, in order for consequences to be predictable and consistently applied, there needs to be *adequate adult supervision*.

*In schools having a history of high rates of suspension, "observers noted [that there were] many more authoritative behaviors (e.g., talking down to and scolding students)."*

*Christle, Nelson, and Jolivette, 2003*

***3. Respectful Disciplinary Practices***

*Never underestimate the power of a child's need to save face.*

*Bluestein, citing a middle school teacher, 2001*

When violations of limits occur, adults apply *non-hostile and non-punitive sanctions*. Consequences are commensurate with the level of infraction: neither too harsh nor too lenient. Care is taken to avoid "reinforcement errors" (i.e., consequences that unintentionally reinforce the problem behavior) such as working in the office after being removed from class, or suspension, which for some students is like taking a "vacation from a setting [they]…find aversive" (Bluestein, 2001).

Public embarrassment is avoided when disciplining, since this will also tend to initiate a power struggle and escalate misbehavior. According to Olweus,

the most effective consequences are those that "cause some discomfort without being hostile" and that are not "directed against the person" (1993).

> *The best way to avoid escalation is to choose consequences that do not anger, humiliate, embarrass, or demean the student. This is especially true of high-risk students. Because they have nothing to lose by continuing the battle, the teacher has almost no leverage in getting them to back down.*
>
> *Curwin, 1992*

*Instead of...a detention or a verbal lashing...[students were] told to reflect on whom they had wronged and what they would do to make sure that such behavior doesn't happen again....[The high school] cut out-of-school suspensions in half in the last four years.*

*Snyder, 2003*

While the use of consequences is essential, consequences *alone* will be limited in their effectiveness—especially for students who have social and coping skill deficits. In order to promote authentic and lasting behavioral change, disciplinary systems need to include components designed to promote reflection and to teach, guide, and support the desired changes in behavior (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Use of out-of-school suspension is avoided whenever possible, "making use instead of in-school suspension accompanied by assistance and support" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995).

*Discipline is carried out in a neutral, matter-of-fact manner.* The presence of negative emotions on the part of the adult will shift the focus from the behavior to the relationship level. Ultimately, this shift will interfere with the student's ability to *learn* from the intervention, and will risk escalating their anger and misbehavior. It will also damage the adult's relationship with the student—thus reducing their ability to be a positive influence. For those students coming from an aggression-generating family system, any form of hostility will only serve to reinforce their belief that aggression and power are effective ways to meet their need.

### *4. Social and Coping Skill-Building*

> *…learning prosocial skills can lead to improvements in student relationships, behavior, attitudes, cooperation and achievement, and help to eliminate negative and antisocial behaviors as well (Lantieri and Patti, 1966). These are skills that can, indeed, be taught.*
>
> *Walker et al., 1995*

Social and coping skills are taught to enhance students' ability to form positive peer and adult relationships, cope effectively with stress, and resist high-risk behaviors such as aggression/violence and chemical use. Examples of competencies taught include *empathy, problem-solving, multicultural education, anger management, impulse control,* and *friendship skills.*

> *To be truly effective, social skills interventions should be planned and offered in a similar fashion as any other academic course of study and should be considered in terms of years rather than weeks…*
>
> *Mcevoy et al., 2000, citing Walker, Stieber, and Bullis, 1997*

These skills are taught beginning in kindergarten and continue through high school, and in addition to teaching the cognitive aspects related to these topics, students are provided opportunities to "practice real-life application of these skills" (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995). Strategies such as cooperative learning, service learning, peer and cross-age tutoring/mentoring are utilized to provide opportunities that add depth and relevance to the social competencies being taught (Bluestein, 2001).

***5. Parent and Community Partnerships***

Strong parent and community partnerships represent an additional protective factor that is specifically relevant to the school environment.

> *…it is crucial to involve parents in the intervention process as much as we can. Change is certainly possible without parental involvement, but schools and students benefit when parents are involved as equal members of the team.*
>
> *Davis, 2003*

*...simply seeking to increase parental involvement in school activities may not necessarily be helpful....The particular ways in which parent-school interactions are dealt with are probably crucial.*

*Rutter, 1998*

Parents are made to feel *welcome in the school*. They are *kept informed* of school goals, activities, and challenges—and have *opportunities for involvement and input*. Proactive steps are taken to develop *positive relationships* with parents, especially those with students having known antisocial behavioral patterns. Recognizing that many of these parents may have a history of negative contact with school, efforts are made through regular phone calls, notes, and meetings to let them know the school *cares about their child* and also sees their child's *positive* traits *and successes*. Contacts are made with these parents early in the year for no other purpose than to *tell them about "things their child is doing right*" (Davis, 2003). This can lay a foundation for including parents in a positive intervention process when problem behaviors occur. When there *is* a problem, *parents' thoughts and concerns are listened to with respect*, with as many suggestions being acted upon as possible (Davis, 2003)—while still maintaining the standards and consistency of the school's discipline policy.

There are also *strong partnerships with the community*, enabling the school to draw upon its resources for needed support and services: community service and service learning programs, mentoring programs, speakers for classroom presentations, funding, and services for students in need of community supports (e.g., mental health services, substance abuse treatment, social supports).

> *Researchers have generally found that well-disciplined schools are those which have a high level of communication and partnership with the communities they serve. These schools have a higher-than-average incidence of parent involvement in school functions, and communities are kept informed of school goals and activities.*
>
> *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*

***6. Early Intervention/Support Services***

In view of the school's legal and educational responsibilities, *early intervention with identifiable problem behaviors* is critical and acts as an additional protective factor. The school recognizes the need to address *any* problem that interferes with a student's ability to succeed socially and academically in school. Therefore, there is a *formal student assistance process* in place for *early* problem identification and referral to appropriate support services, either within the school or the community. It's important that the student assistance process be responsive to a broad range of behavioral "red flags," including problems with academics, troubled family or peer relationships, chemical use, mental health concerns, and disruptive/antisocial behaviors of any kind. In addition, there is a c*risis response plan and a trained team* in place that can respond to a variety of traumatic incidents.

*The presence or absence of effective prevention and intervention programs that serve students with a range of risks and abilities is likely to affect the rates of school disciplinary events.*

*Morrison et al., 2001*

The *school has a guidance counselor* who has time allocated for providing individual/group counseling and supporting students in need of remedial social/coping skill development (e.g., anger management, impulse control). The use of small support/skill groups is especially important with students having a history of problem behaviors. In an innovative school for high-risk students in Foley, Minnesota (Turning Point School), *all* students participate in weekly support groups as part of their alternative learning program. The groups are designed to support personal growth and achievement of behavioral goals, including maintaining sobriety.

Whether providing school-based or community-based support, the goal is to intervene before problem behaviors become entrenched and potentially dangerous–-and to let youth know that their school cares about them as "people" as well as "students."

## The Power of School Protective Factors

Schools in the United States and Europe that have implemented strategies related to the above protective factors demonstrate the following impact on student behavior (Olweus, 1993):

- fifty percent reduction in bullying and victimization among students,
- marked reduction in general antisocial behavior, including fighting, theft, alcohol use, vandalism, and truancy,
- significant improvements in order and discipline,
- more positive social relationships,
- more positive attitude toward schoolwork, and
- improved attitude toward school in general.

## Summary

As Morrison said, "A school's environment may present students with challenges or assistance in the development and maintenance of appropriate school behavior" (2001). Thus, whether a school's environment presents students with additional "*challenges*" or with "*assistance*" will depend upon whether or not the adults consciously promote warm, harmonious relationships and bonding; set and uphold clear limits and consequences; and consistently use respectful disciplinary practices.

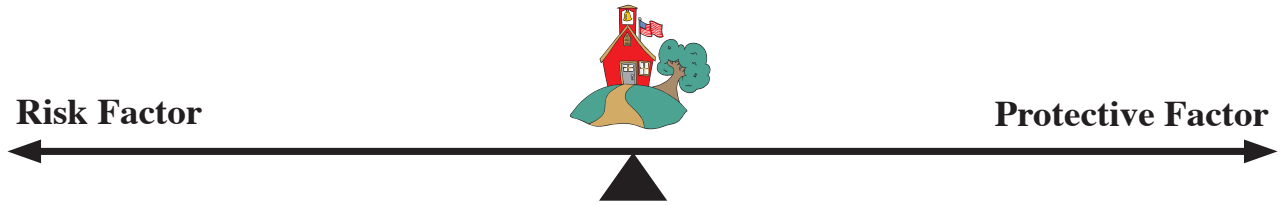
These protective factors form the basic framework for schools to provide a safe and orderly learning environment that discourages a wide range of antisocial behaviors related to suspension and expulsion. The comprehensive implementation of the above strategies can play a critical role in intervening in a disturbing and predictable path that takes students from antisocial behavior to suspension and expulsion, delinquency, and ultimately to prison. The lack of a *systemic* approach that incorporates these research-based strategies will result in an exacerbation of the very types of behavior a school is trying to prevent: truancy, academic failure, rule infractions, aggression, suspension, and expulsion.

*This picture of family distress, school failure and student discouragement suggests that alternative strategies to punishment for school offenses are needed to assist these students toward improved behavioral and academic trajectories.*

*Morrison et al., 2001*

> *Effective schools exert positive influences on student behavior despite conditions in the home, social status, gender, race, or ethnicity.*
>
> *Mcevoy et al., 2000*

# *Figure 2:* School Domain Risk and Protective Factors




### Connectedness and Bonding to School

*Is there a sense of warmth and positive interactions between students and peers, and students and adults?*
*How much "positive attention" do students get from teachers and administrators?*
*Is there a strong sense of "community" where all students feel they belong?*
*Do students have opportunities for involvement, meaningful roles, and opportunities for decision-making?*

### Limits and Consequences

*How well do students and staff know what the behavioral limits and consequences are?*
*How consistently do all staff uphold the behavioral expectations?*
*Are the consequences predictable and consistently applied to all students?*
*Have students had input into school rules and consequences?*

### Respectful Disciplinary Practices

*Are consequences non-punitive and commensurate with the level of infractions?*
*Is a reflection and learning component included as part of the consequence?*
*Are disciplinary interventions applied in a non-hostile manner that is neutral and matter-of-fact?*

### Social and Coping Skills

*Are social/coping and multicultural skills taught to all students each year?*
*Are students who need help in deficit areas provided with skill-building opportunities?*
*Is the reinforcement of social/coping skills integrated into the school day in teachable moments?*

### Parent and Community Partnerships

*Are parents made to feel welcome in school?*
*What opportunities are there for parents to be meaningfully involved in school?*
*Are proactive steps taken to provide parents with positive feedback regarding their child (including students having problems in school)?*
*Are there strong partnerships with the community?*

### Intervention/Support Services

*Is there a counselor on staff who has time allocated to provide counseling and skill development?*
*Are there school-based support/skill groups available for students?*
*Is there a formal student assistance process in place for early problem identification and referral to support?*
*Is there a crisis response plan and trained team in place to respond to critical incidents?*

# D. Community Domain: Characteristics and Factors

There are many community factors identified in the literature that can affect youth risk levels: availability of alcohol and drugs; availability of firearms; community crime; economic deprivation; social disorder and lack of safety (e.g., hate crimes, vandalism and graffiti, condemned buildings); community instability (e.g., mobility and housing issues), and low attachment to the community (Development Services Group, 2002). Hawkins et al., (1992) include "community laws and norms favorable toward drug use" to their list of community risk factors.

Some of these *risk* factors are so global in their scope that it is difficult to envision how to impact them. There are, however, some well-researched community *protective* factors that can directly influence them, especially if the effort is part of a school-community partnership. The following protective factors emerge from a broad base of research in healthy youth development and resiliency (Development Services Group, 2002; Search Institute, 2003; Henderson et al., 1996; Pittman, 1993):

*No longer can groups of people work in isolation, at cross purposes, or without the necessary understanding and support of those who are affected by their decisions.*

*R. Golarz and M. Golarz, 1994*

***1. Presence of Caring, Supportive Adults***

> *The most critical resiliency builder…is a basic trusting relationship, even with one adult, within the family or without, that says, "You matter."*
>
> *Werner, 1990 cited in Gelham, 1991*

In order for children to have a sense of attachment and bonding to their community, they need to have positive *connections* to people within the community. It is through relationships with *individuals* that feelings of attachment extend to *institutions*, such as businesses, organizations, churches —and ultimately to the community as a whole. The research on resiliency is very clear: the presence of *at least one* caring and supportive adult is critical, particularly for those children who live with adversity and family problems. For those children, someone from outside the family can be that source of caring and support—perhaps a teacher, member of the clergy, employer, or a mentor.

> *What is evident from nearly all the research into the family environments of resilient children is that, "despite the burden of parental psychopathology, family discord, or chronic poverty, most children identified as resilient have had the opportunity to establish a close bond with at least one person…" (quote from Werner, 1990).*
>
> *Benard, 1992*

Even for children whose parents *do* provide high levels of caring and support, meaningful connections with other adults are important. Indeed, one of the protective "assets" identified by Search Institute specifically refers to the need for "nonfamily, intergenerational support." In the words of Peter Benson

(1997), "support is not only a family enterprise. It also belongs to the larger community."

### *2. High Expectations of Youth*

*...our society tells children and youth that "they have no real place in the scheme of things, that their only responsibility is to go to school and learn and grow up. When they have learned and grown up, which is supposed to occur miraculously at age 18, they can perhaps make some modest contribution as a citizen."*

*Benard, 1992 citing Hedin, 1987*

Children have a way of "living up" (or "living down," as the case may be) to the expectations adults have of them. Unfortunately, in the case of communities, expectations of youth tend to be alarmingly low. One way low expectations are communicated to youth is the lack of opportunities to actively participate in community life.

Bonnie Benard points out that a "denial of opportunities" for youth to be "meaningful participants and contributors in community life" is a *natural consequence* of a community's low expectations (Benard, 1992 citing Kurth-Schai, 1988). Using the criteria of "being given responsible roles" and "feeling valued" as indicators, studies conducted by Search Institute confirm the existence of low expectations in communities across the nation. Data from 217,000 students in grades 6–12 indicate that only 28% feel they were given useful roles in their communities and 25% believe their community values young people (1999-2000). In addition to whether or not youth are given opportunities to participate and contribute, a community's expectations are communicated by hundreds of large and small interactions, for example, how people greet and talk to youth in public, how they are portrayed in local media, and how employers treat youth in their jobs.

The lack of opportunities to participate in community life and be treated with respect will result in youth feeling disconnected and alienated from their communities. Conversely, communities that provide youth with opportunities for participation and positive interactions will *project high expectations*. The resulting sense of "being a part of" and connections of attachment will serve as a powerful motivator for youth to "live up" to those high expectations.

### *3. Opportunities for Participation*

> *The natural outcome of having high expectations for youth, for viewing youth as resources and not problems, is the creation of opportunities for them to be contributing members of their community.*
>
> *Benard, 1992*

Not only will the community benefit from the perspectives, talents, and energy of its young people, feelings of being needed and valued will also benefit the young people. One of the assets included in the "Empowerment" category of Search Institute's essential building blocks is the concept of giving young people "useful roles in the community" (2003). Opportunities to make *meaningful* contributions will add to their feelings of self-esteem, competency—and to bonding with the people and institutions of their community. The importance of opportunities for involvement can also be viewed from a different perspective: "The reverse process of participation is alienation, the lack of bonding to the

social institutions like the family, the school, and the community" (Benard, 1992).

Involvement in service activities is a concept that is gaining attention as "a growing body of literature supports the power of youth involvement in service to strengthen both academic and social outcomes" (Benson,1990 citing Moore and Allen, 1996). Search Institute data reveal that students involved in at least one hour of "helping behavior" on a weekly basis had lower rates of involvement in high-risk behaviors. Involvement in projects and programs to help others is associated with lower at-risk behavior rates (Benson, 1990).

> *When children are given responsibilities, the message is clearly communicated that they are worthy and capable of being contributing members of a family [school, or community].*
>
> *Benard, 1992*

*Unless communities begin to actively engage their young in the affairs of community––providing places and moments of connection, involvement, partnership, input, and responsibility––we risk reinforcing an anti-adult youth culture…*

*Benson, 1997*

Responsibilities and roles for youth that were once critical for the very survival of families and communities have largely been replaced by "autonomy and leisure, and [are] frequently accompanied by no adult supervision" (Benard, 1992). In effect, adolescence can be a time of "rolelessness"—leaving teens with limited positive options for directing their energy. Providing youth with opportunities to contribute *needed* service will not only build their sense of self-esteem and competency, it will also give them a meaningful *role* to play in their community—and thus, a connection.

*Note:* For additional information about three bodies of protective factor research, refer to Section IIIA: *Effective School Domain Strategies* and Section V: *Resources*. (See *Asset Model*, *Resiliency Model*, and *Positive Youth Development Model*.)

# II. SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION: INTENT AND REALITY

**Key Question**: ***What is the intent of suspension and expulsion, and what is the reality of its impact upon students?***

## Suspension and Expulsion

Suspension and expulsion remove students who are exhibiting problem behaviors from the learning environment of the school. There are a variety of ways in which students can be removed:

1. in-school suspension,
2. short-term, out-of-school suspension (10 days or less),
3. long-term, out-of-school suspension or expulsion (up to 180 days), or
4. permanent expulsion (Michigan Department of Education Pupil Accounting Manual, 2002).

*Expulsion is a process, not merely an event....When a student commits an expellable offense at school, it is often not a surprise in the context of the student's developmental history.*

*Morrison et al., 2001*

## The Intent

"…suspension typically is intended by the administration…as a punishment" for an "inappropriate act or behavior" (Raffaele-Mendez and Knoff, 2003), with the presumed rationale being that such punishment will motivate a behavioral change in the student. In cases where weapons are involved, an additional goal is to ensure safety in the school environment. There is a substantial amount of research and practical evidence that indicates that while the *intent* is *positive*, the overall *reality* is *negative*.

> *…if a primary goal is to reduce misbehavior, out-of-school suspension and expulsion are completely counter-productive…*
>
> *Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

## The Reality

> *"Zero tolerance" began as a prohibition against guns, but it has quickly expanded into a frenzy of punishment and tougher disciplinary measures in American schools. Ironically…recent research indicates that as schools adopt more zero tolerance policies they in fact become less safe, in part because the first casualties of these measures are the central, critical relationships between teacher and student and between school and community.*
>
> *W. Ayers, Dohrn, and R. Ayers, 2001*

Not only have suspension and expulsion been found to be ineffective (Morrison et al., 2001), they are likely to result in a number of negative student outcomes. "Repeated suspensions for minor misbehavior convey a clear message to young people that the school system is authoritarian and arbitrary, and does not value

them as individuals" (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The consequences of arbitrary or overly punitive discipline are costly: students respond with anger, resentment, mistrust, and disconnection from the authority figures in school—which is only a step away from disconnection from school and learning. The likely outcome of "tough" disciplinary actions is an increase in anti-authority and antisocial behavior.

> *People's responses to levels of punishment are influenced by their feelings on its fairness and reasonableness (Hart, 1978). If harsh punishments are viewed as discriminatory and unreasonable, the main result may be an increase in resentment and a correspondingly reduced general deterrence effect.*
>
> *Rutter et al., 1998*

Furthermore, suspension and expulsion can create "educational gaps from which many students cannot recover" resulting in *academic failure, grade retention, and dropping out of school* (Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003 citing Brooks, Schiraldi, and Ziedenberg, 1999; Nichols, Ludwin, and Iadicola, 1999). These unintended consequences set the stage for a domino effect of additional negative behaviors and consequences, including *teenage pregnancy* and increasingly serious *antisocial and delinquent behaviors* that result in involvement in the *juvenile court system* (Clark et al., 2003). Thus, instead of decreasing problem behaviors, suspension and expulsion are likely to increase them.

> *Out-of-school suspension and expulsion interrupt students' educational progress and remove students from school at a time when they may most need stability and guidance in their lives…[making it] impossible for the students to keep up with the curriculum….Even more ominously, suspensions and expulsions reduce adult supervision and give students unstructured time in which to get in trouble.*
>
> *Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

*Expelling a child from school may act to further alienate him or her from the learning environment and those in it, and may even intensify those troubling behaviors targeted for elimination.*

*Morrison et al., 2001*

**Zero Tolerance—and Suspension and Expulsion**

In spite of the data indicating the ineffectiveness of removal from school, its use has increased during the past decade. Out-of-school suspensions "are one of the most commonly used forms of discipline in the United States" (Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003 citing Dupper and Bosch, 1996). This rise is due, in part, to the introduction of "zero tolerance" policies in the early 1990s (Skiba, Peterson, Boon, and Fonatanini, 2000). In response to concerns of an increase in juvenile homicides with firearms and fear of school violence, Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, which "required states to expel firearm-carrying students for at least one calendar year" (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003). The concept of "zero tolerance" held great appeal as a "no-nonsense response" to fears of school violence (Skiba et al., 2000). Not only did the "hard line"

approach increase in frequency of use since the early 1990s, the range of behaviors that carry mandated suspension and expulsion has also increased.

> *Since the passage of the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, Michigan's legislature has enacted a series of laws requiring expulsion (or suspension) for a number of offenses, extending far beyond the firearm violations that are the subject of the federal laws.*
>
> *Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

According to data compiled by the Michigan Public Policy Initiative, "Michigan's policies are particularly stringent" in comparison with national norms. In addition to the consequences for firearm violations required by the Gun-Free Schools Act, they include *mandated* expulsion for the following behaviors: possession of a dangerous weapon, arson, criminal sexual conduct on school grounds, and physical assault against a school employee. Michigan law requires suspension or expulsion for physical fighting and assaults against other students (even if no weapon was involved), and verbal assaults against school employees or volunteers (2003). Students have also been suspended or expelled for use of disobedience, theft, vandalism, alcohol/drug use, possession of drugs, and drug distribution (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). In some schools, zero tolerance includes the "use of pagers or laser pointers, and sexual harassment" (Skiba, 2000 citing Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

*...students viewed most disciplinary problems as resulting from rules that were unjust or unfairly applied....Students who are already at-risk for disruption may see confrontational discipline as a challenge to escalate their behavior.*

*Skiba, 2000 citing Gottredson, 1989*

Another example of the stringency of Michigan's policy is the fact that while the federal law allows for some discretion by the administrator, Michigan law does not:

> *…the current federal law requires that the "chief administering officer" of the local educational agency have the authority to modify the expulsion requirement in any particular case, Michigan's statute does not explicitly include this requirement of discretion.*
>
> *Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

Clearly, violent behavior and dangerous assaults against staff should not be tolerated. However, the literature indicates that the vast majority of suspensions and expulsions are "misbehaviors" that are "adolescent, but not violent" (Building Blocks for Youth, 2003).

> *While it is difficult to ascertain just how many students are expelled from Michigan schools each year because data are not routinely collected and reported to a central source and because data are not collected in uniform ways….It is estimated that more than 3,600 students were expelled from Michigan schools during academic year 1999-2000….Many of these students were expelled for behaviors that once would have been considered nothing more than adolescent antics or poor judgment.*
>
> *Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

A study conducted by Morrison and D'Incau (1997) indicated that nationally, only about 20% of the students disciplined as a result of zero tolerance policy represented the types of infractions that the policy was intended to address: threats to school safety (Holloway, 2001/2002). In Michigan, only 16% of expulsions involved a weapon and 38% of expulsions were for fighting without a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

> *Data consistently show that…referrals for drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors constitute but a small minority of office referrals leading to suspension. Fighting among students is the single most frequent reason for suspension, but the majority of suspensions occur in response to relatively minor incidents that do not threaten school safety. At the middle school level, disrespect and disobedience are among the most common reasons for suspension, and a significant proportion…are for tardiness and truancy.*
>
> *Skiba et al., 1999*

*Push effects are factors located within the school itself, which negatively impact the connection adolescents make with the school's environment and cause them to reject the context of schooling. This rejection...may manifest in disruptive behavior, absenteeism, or a cessation of academic effort.*

*Jordan et al., 1994*

In addition, there is evidence that suspensions and expulsions are not reserved as a last resort for non-violent infractions after other interventions have failed. Students are sometimes removed from school after a first offense to set an example:

> *An assault in the fourth degree, which is a misdemeanor, may be as simple as a school yard fight where one student got the upper hand… school officials may "overcharge" a student for a particular incident in order to "send a message" to the child, his friends, his parents, and the court.*
>
> *Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*

**Misuses of Suspension and Expulsion**

***Confusing Terminology and Misapplication***

Both in Michigan and across the nation, there are indications of confusion and misuse of the zero tolerance policy in interpreting and/or administering suspensions and expulsions. There are instances where there has been a very loose interpretation of terms, such as "assault," "arson" or "weapon." There have been examples where the definition of "weapon" was interpreted to include "key chains" (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Noguera, 2001), and "toenail clippers" (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). There are also instances of ridiculous interpretations of the term, such as classifying "chicken fingers" as a weapon (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003 citing Light, 2001).

While there is a tendency to assume that examples such as these are infrequent "aberrations" resulting from "overzealous administration," Skiba finds that the pervasiveness with which these sorts of things happen "across time and location suggests that the over-extension of school sanctions to minor misbehavior is

not anomalous, rather it is inherent in the philosophy and application of zero tolerance" (2000).

***Pushouts***

Another misuse of zero tolerance policies includes the use of suspension and expulsion to literally "*push*" students out of school who are viewed as low-achieving and troublesome students. "Schools want to get rid of the troublemakers and the kids who bring down the test cores (Dohrn, 2001).

> *In ethnographic studies, school disciplinarians report that suspension is sometimes used as a tool to "push out" particular students, to encourage "troublemakers" or those perceived as unlikely to succeed in school to leave.*
>
> *Skiba et al., 1999 citing Bowditch, 1993 and Fine, 1986*

Multiple short-term suspensions, which can be given at the school's discretion without formal proceedings, can be a form of "push out." When given in a series, short-term suspensions "cumulatively, reflect a loss of learning time which equals a long-term suspension or expulsion" (McDonald Brown et al., 1994). The consequences of a significant loss in learning time are not difficult to predict: problems keeping up academically and increased feelings of disconnection from school—which frequently result in students dropping out.

Sometimes the process of pushing a student out of school is more subtle, consisting of "failing to follow up when a student is absent, ignoring the student when he or she does come to school, or making it clear that the student is not expected to work or achieve at school, only to be quiet and behave" (Thompson, ed. 1991). These things can result in the student disconnecting from school. They internalize the message that they aren't wanted in school and they can't succeed academically—setting the stage for behavioral problems that lead to suspension or expulsion or dropping out of school.

There is a disturbing pattern of disproportionate use of suspension and expulsion policies for certain populations: students having special needs, minority students, and young students (Morrison et al., 2001).

*As risk indicators, conduct problems and ADHD are particularly deserving of "red flags" in terms of risk for future recommendations for expulsion (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1998).*

*Morrison et al., 2000*

***Special Needs Students***

> *…special needs students are caught often in the web of zero-tolerance....Case histories and demographic descriptions of excluded students have revealed a heterogeneous group, very few of whom presented real or serious dangers to students or staff.*
>
> *Morrison et al., 2001*

Students having special needs are disproportionately expelled, both on the national level (Morrison et al., 2001) and in Michigan (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003). According to the Student Advocacy Center (2002), 71% of the students expelled during the 1999-2000 school year had special needs. Of

those, 19.6% were "special education certified or were receiving protections under the Rehabilitation Act of 1976." The remainder had identifiable emotional problems, including ADHD (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

***Minority Students***

> *Unfortunately, minority students continue to be grossly over-represented when rates of suspension are compared…[they] are more likely to be disciplined (a) for minor offenses and (b) with disproportionately higher levels of punishment or intensive intervention.*
>
> *Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003 citing Morrison and D'Incau, 1997*

Data presented in *Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students* indicate that Michigan youth of color are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than white students. African American students are affected the most. Although they represent only 17% of school enrollment, African American students constitute 39.1% of Michigan's expulsions and are being suspended at a rate that is 2.5 times that of the general population of students. (It is interesting to note that according to Nichols (1999) race was a factor in communities with moderate-income levels. The effect of race was *not* seen in the poorer communities—rather, in those communities, poverty seemed to be a more significant factor, with boys who qualified for free or reduced lunch being more than twice as likely to be removed as were their peers whose families did not qualify for free or reduced school lunch.) Latino students were suspended at 1.4 times and Native American students 1.3 times the rate of the general student population (Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003).

National studies indicate similar disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students of color. They are over-represented even after controlling for factors related to socio-economic differences and the types of misbehavior (Skiba et al., 1999). Skiba found that schools that rely most heavily on suspension and expulsion as a general practice to address misbehavior show the "highest rates of minority over-representation."

*...every human encounter —positive or negative— reflects cultural assumptions upon which communication rules are based....School personnel are more likely to perceive students' behaviors, including their communicative behaviors, as being disruptive and discordant when those behaviors diverge from the norms of the school.*

*Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*

Cross-cultural communication could play a role in the disproportionate number of minority students being suspended and expelled. Because 5 of the 9 most commonly reported behaviors "involve cultural and communicative issues, e.g., verbal threats, classroom disruptions and disrespect," this factor warrants exploration.

> *Students with cultural and communicative norms which are incongruous with the school's norms are more likely…to engage in unacceptable behavior….School personnel should be open to examining the causes of perceived misbehavior in the classroom.*
>
> *Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001*

***Young Students***

> *Generally speaking, the students affected by zero tolerance policies are not the older, tougher students the law may have been created to address…students…(grades 6-9) were expelled at higher rates than any other age group during academic year 1999-2000 [in Michigan].*
>
> *Michigan Public Policy Initiative, 2003*

The report goes on to say that 14 is the most common age for expulsion in the State of Michigan. This is consistent with national data regarding exclusion of students in middle school. Students in grades 6-9 are undergoing tremendous physical, cognitive, social, and emotional transitions. Moving from elementary to secondary levels is a significant transition in itself—it is a time "where they encounter school environments that are larger, less personal, and require greater self-control and self-direction" (Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003). It is a pivotal time when students' need for support and guidance is increasing, and the availability of guidance and support, by virtue of the contextual structure of middle and high schools, is decreasing. Exclusionary consequences without *structured opportunities to learn* from mistakes, especially during this developmental time period, can lead to long-term academic failure and dropping out of school.

*It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.*

*Holloway, 2001/2002 citing Curwin and Mendler, 1999*

***Male Students***

Data gathered by the Family Independence Agency in Michigan indicate that 65% of students expelled from schools in 1999 were male (Michigan Public Policy Initiaitve, 2003). The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan presents an even "more troubling picture" based upon an analysis of 91 expulsion cases from 1999 to 2000: 82.4% of Michigan expulsions involved males. This last figure is more closely in line with national suspension data indicating that males are being suspended at a rate that is approximately twice that of females (Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003).

## Summary

In summary, the scope and use of suspension and expulsion have gone far beyond the intent of the original policies and legislation of the 1990s. There are schools that overly rely on suspension and expulsion as the mainstay of their discipline policy, excluding students as a first step rather than reserving it as a last resort for chronic problems or for potentially dangerous situations. There are also schools that misinterpret and misuse zero tolerance policies, often at the expense of special needs students, minority students, and young students (grades 6-9).

The data regarding the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion as part of a harsh "zero tolerance" disciplinary strategy are consistent and clear: *Suspension and expulsion are not effective*. They are not effective in promoting a positive behavioral change within individual students, and in fact are likely to compound

students' problem behavior. Nor are they necessarily effective in creating a safer school; they can even result in a "less safe" learning environment.

That being said, *there are definitely times when it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion*. However, there are a number of strategies that will 1) *decrease* the number of times it is necessary to use suspension and expulsion, and 2) *increase* their effectiveness on those occasions when it *is* necessary to use them.

> *Eliminating zero tolerance policies is a hard sell because the concept is simple to understand, sounds tough, and gives the impression of high standards for behavior….Any intervention for changing children's behavior that is simple is simple-minded, and those that substitute formulas for decisions made by people who understand the circumstances are dangerous. It's time for schools to develop legitimate high standards by refusing to fall for the lure of what is easy and sounds good and choosing instead what is truly best for children.*
>
> *Holloway, 2001/2002 citing Curwin and Mendler, 1999*

The following recommendations (bold type) appear as strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions in the Michigan Public Policy Initiative publication, "Zero Tolerance Policies and Their impact on Michigan Students" (2003). They are taken from the work of Pedro A. Noguera ("Finding Safety Where We Least Expect It") that appears in *Zero Tolerance: Resisting the Drive for Punishment in Our Schools* (2001).

*In a study of 988 schools, researchers found that for every 400-student increase in the high school population, there would be approximately a one percent rise in the dropout rate.*

*Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994*

## Michigan Public Policy Initiative Recommendations

**1. Reduce anonymity, alienation and the impersonal character of schools.**

> *A common feature of many large schools is that the connections between adults and students are weak, and, as a result, many students lack consistent meaningful contact with adults.*
>
> *Noguera, 2001*

There is a significant body of literature that indicates that small schools may have an advantage in being able to provide environments that promote feelings of connection and bonding (McRobbie, 2001). A meta-analysis of the literature comparing large schools to small schools on a number of categories indicates that the ideal size for secondary schools is 400-500 students (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1996). While developing a sense of community may be easier to accomplish in small schools, there are many things large schools can do to meet the social and

emotional needs of students, such as creation of schools or academies within a school, advisor/advisee programs, homerooms, student assistance programs, block scheduling, reducing the number of students assigned to counselors, mentoring programs, etc.

**2. Promote a climate of respect by responding quickly and consistently to minor infractions.**

> *...responding to minor offenses sends the strong message that any attempt to undermine the values of a school community will be addressed immediately.*
>
> *Noguera, 2001*

"Zero tolerance" doesn't have to mean: "Step out of line and *you're out*!" It can mean: "Step out of line, and *we will respond*." It's critically important to respond "quickly and consistently to minor infractions" so students know what the behavioral expectations are and that the expectations will be upheld. However, it is equally important to respond to infractions with consequences that are fair and that are implemented without violating the dignity of the student. As educators, in order to *teach* respect, we must *model* respect—even when disciplining.

**3. Adopt a preventative approach to discipline utilizing strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their behavior and learn from their mistakes.**

> *…discipline should not be used to exacerbate poor attendance or academic performance. Rather, whenever possible, students should be encouraged to learn from mistakes, and punishments should be designed to encourage reflection on their behavior.*
>
> *Noguera, 2001*

*[The problem is that suspension and expulsion rarely have] "a logical, functional, or instructive connection to the offense or infraction; and it usually occurs in the absence of additional interventions that focus on teaching or reinforcing students' more prosocial or appropriate responses to difficult situations."*

*Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003*

There are many strategies that encourage reflection and learning, including a guided, written reflection process; tranformative conferences; community service; after-school tutoring; and peer mediation. For students who have a pattern of anti-social behavior, consequences alone will not help them learn, or be motivated to use, pro-social skills. They need consequences *plus* reflection and skill-building in order to learn from their mistakes.

**4. Provide numerous opportunities for students to become more deeply engaged in school and activities that further their development.**

There are three aspects to the concept of engagement: 1) extracurricular engagement, 2) social engagement, and 3) intellectual engagement. With regards to *extracurricular engagement*, when students are involved in activities in the school that require practice, they're busy. They simply have less free time on their hands in which they might become involved in antisocial activities. With regard to *social engagement*, providing time for students to develop positive social relationships will help them feel

accepted and like "they belong." This will help minimize bullying and harassment problems in school, and consequently help ensure a safer environment. Lastly, students who are *intellectually engaged* are less likely to misbehave and get into trouble. They are more likely to enjoy learning and like school—and have an investment in their academic success.

> *…researchers have found that teachers who are able to intellectually engage their students are less likely to experience disruptions or other problematic behavior.*
>
> *Noguera, 2001 citing Alschuler, 1994*

There are many ways to promote engagement in students, including providing: 1) a wider range of extracurricular activities (e.g., art clubs, chess clubs, informal sports); 2) experiential learning activities (e.g., ropes courses, team initiatives); 3) service learning projects; 4) brain-compatible learning strategies (strategies based on the neuroscience of learning); and 5) school-to-work programs.

The Michigan Department of Education adds one more recommendation to those suggested by Noguera:

**5. Provide early intervention and treatment for at-risk students, particularly those who have been identified as having mental health concerns.**

> *What is the function or purpose of the acting out behavior? Is it linked to unresolved academic or social problems? Is the teacher receiving adequate support in trying to manage the student's behavior? Unfortunately, although suspension can protect the interests of other students, and staff, it often is not functionally linked to the core problem that results in the suspension.*
>
> *Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003*

*Students who receive help and support to deal with pressing personal concerns [and challenges] will be able to focus their remaining energy more efficiently on their schoolwork and important tasks of developing academically, socially, and emotionally.*

*Newsam, 1992*

In view of the number of Michigan students who have been suspended or expelled with a wide variety of identifiable mental health concerns, it is essential to have a formal procedure to gather and analyze information regarding a student's problem behavior and determine what sort of support services are needed. Comprehensive Student Assistance Programs are designed to perform both functions: 1) gather and analyze information, and 2) identify appropriate support services. The range of support services might include in-school supports, such as participation in an anger-management group, being connected to a peer mentor, or receiving special education services. They might also include out-of-school referrals for professional mental health services. For students having chronic behavioral problems, a functional behavioral assessment may also be useful.

> *Thus, schools need to have procedures in place to functionally analyze the reasons for a student's multiple suspensions, and when a student is*

> *suspended repeatedly to determine if the behavior is a reflection of a specific disability (IDEA, 1999)….Moreover, for students with chronic behavior problems, it is recommended that schools work with families and community agencies to develop strategies for school-lined and wrap-around services and problem-solving interventions.*
>
> *Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003*

The above recommendations incorporate all of the protective factors identified in Section I: *(School Domain)*. When implemented, they work together to develop a balance of "social capital" with students. The resulting bonds of respect and "reciprocity" not only promote safe and orderly schools, but also contribute to a successful learning environment. By creating a safer and more positive learning environment, we will ultimately decrease the number of times it is *necessary* to suspend or expel students.

And for those students whose behavior calls for suspension or expulsion, the research calls for us to think creatively and find ways to keep students connected to the larger learning community while they are out of the regular school setting. Strategies to increase the effectiveness of suspension and expulsion will be addressed in more detail in Section III: *From Research to Practice: Strategies for Making Connections*.

> *It also is very important for schools to have alternatives to suspension available. Although there are times when students must be removed from their regular classrooms, this does not mean that they have to be completely removed from a school's broader learning environment. Some schools have in-school suspension programs available. Others have alternative suspension sites where students can be supervised on the day(s) of their suspensions. Still others use Saturday School programs for some suspensions. Regardless, it is recommended that in-school suspension and alternative-to-suspension programs:*
>
> *(a) involve a rehabilitative component (as opposed to being strictly punishment-oriented),*
>
> *(b) actively involve parents (e.g., by requiring parent involvement at the alternative site), and*
>
> *(c) be linked to other support services for students and families (e.g., through collaborative partnerships with local social service agencies).*
>
> *In the end, a focus on the goal of suspension must be maintained: to understand why the inappropriate behavior is occurring, to develop and implement remedial interventions, and to decrease or eliminate the occurrence of future inappropriate behavior and suspensions.*
>
> *Raffaele-Mendez et al., 2003*

# III. FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING CONNECTIONS

**Key Question:** ***How can schools and communities work together with parents to create a circle of support for healthy youth development and success in school?***

If we are to help suspended and expelled students make connections that are critical to breaking the cycle of suspensions that lead to expulsion, *we must think systemically.* We must look at strategies that will create linkages and mobilize resources of students' families, schools, and communities. At a time when they most need structure and support, suspended and expelled students typically find themselves in situations that are unstructured, unsupervised, and unsupported. Too often, the unintended consequences of this time period are an increase in high risk behaviors, including drug use, teen pregnancy, criminal activity—behaviors that ultimately lead to school failure and involvement in the court system (Clark et al., 2003).

When the school and community work together as partners, they can implement community service and mentoring programs that can provide suspended and expelled students with much needed structure, supervision, and supportive adult guidance. Instead of being a time that is devoid of critical developmental supports, suspended and expelled students can have a chance to learn new skills, contribute to their community, explore possible careers, and discover that people care and believe in them. It can be a time of learning and renewed *hope* that provides them with a bridge to a successful school experience when they return.

The focus in this Resource Guide will be on research-based strategies that can be implemented within the Community and School Domains. While the primary focus is on these two domains, it is important to note that there are strategies within each to create connections with students' parents—thus creating links that can complete a circle of support for healthy youth development and success in school. Each of the two domains is comprised of three major components:

A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

1. Partnerships
2. Community Service Projects
3. Mentoring Programs

B. Structured School Domain Strategies

1. Quality Leadership
2. Positive School Climate
3. Effective Instruction

The rationale and research-based strategies for each of the domain components will be discussed.

*Thus, social networks are strengthened and social capital is increased when partnership activities are implemented that enable families, educators, and community members to work cooperatively around children's growth and development (Epstein and Sanders, 1996).*

*Sanders and Epstein, 1998*

# A. Structured Community Domain Strategies

**Key Question:** ***How can we help suspended and expelled students connect to their schools, the people in their schools, to learning, to their communities, and to themselves?***

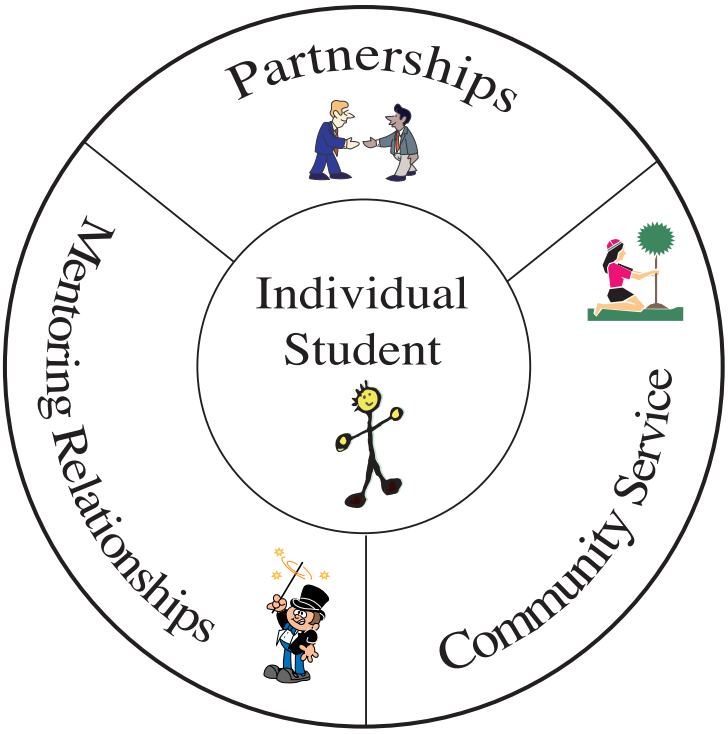



**Figure 3: Community Domain Environmental Protective Factors**

There are protective factors in the community that can promote students' social and academic education. While research indicates *all* students can benefit from school connections with the community, they play a particularly critical role for students serving out-of-school suspensions or expulsions who find themselves excluded from the school's learning environment at a time when they most need structure and supportive relationships. The three major components of the Community Domain can serve as a "delivery system" for numerous protective factors that can promote "resiliency" in suspended and expelled students—the ability to rebound or bounce back from adverse circumstances.

*The full integration of schools into neighborhood and community life can do much to rebuild the social infrastructure that has been so devastated by the social and economic problems of the past quarter century.*

*Walker, 1995*

# Community Domain: Partnerships

## Introduction to Partnerships

A partnership is a sustained, collaborative effort between two or more people/social entities having shared goals and responsibilities. The defining characteristics of successful partnerships include "mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities" (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d. citing Ballen and Moles, 1994).

> *Epstein (1992) states the term partnership "implies a formal alliance and contractual agreement to work toward shared goals and to share the profits or benefits of mutual investments."*
>
> *North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.*

*Partnerships tend to decline across the grades unless schools and teachers work to develop and implement appropriate practices of partnerships at each grade level.*

*Epstein, 1995*

In the case of family-community-school partnerships, the shared goal is the successful education and healthy development of youth. The shared profits are the benefits that citizens who are well educated, caring and productive can provide to their families, and society as a whole.

## Six Types of Partnership Involvements

Based upon extensive research, Epstein has developed a framework of six types of involvement, with each type of involvement representing a different type of partnership. Each of the partnerships serves a purpose, and each has its unique set of positive outcomes and challenges. The following overview of types of involvement is based upon Epstein's research (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, and VanVoorhis, 2002).

### *1. Parenting*

The *parenting partnership* is characterized by workshops/services designed to assist parents create home environments that will support their child's education. It also helps schools have a better understanding of their students' families.

*Challenges*: Time and financial resources needed to publicize programs; recruit parent participation; provide the workshops/services.

*Benefits*: Increased level of mutual understanding and respect between parents and educators; increased parental reinforcement and support for their child's educational goals; enhanced parenting skills.

> *Three factors over which parents exercise authority—student absenteeism, variety of reading materials in the home, and excessive television watching—explain nearly 90 percent of the difference in eighth-grade mathematic test scores across 37 states and the District of*

*Columbia on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Thus, controllable home factors account for almost all the differences in average student achievement across states (Coley, 1992).*

*Families Worldwide, n.d.*

### *2. Communicating*

The *communicating partnership* is designed to provide effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication regarding school programs and their children's progress.

*Challenges*: Staff time required to make home visits, phone calls, or written communication (notes or newsletters)—including accommodating the needs of non-English speaking parents.

*Benefits*: Increased parental understanding and support for teachers; school policies and programming, and educators' efforts to help their child; increased level of parental awareness and monitoring of their child's progress; increased teacher understanding of student's needs and parental support to address those needs; enhanced school-family relationships and ease of interaction.

*…parents' overall evaluation of the teacher, their sense of comfort with the school, and their reported involvement in school activities was higher when parents received frequent and effective communications from teachers. When communication was continual, varied, and covered both classroom content and individual information about their own child, parents were more likely to take part in suggested activities.*

*Caplan, Hall, Lubin, and Fleming, 1997*

*Regardless of family background or school context, when high schools reach out to involve families, families respond with increased involvement.*

*Epstein et al., 2002*

### *3. Volunteering*

The *volunteering partnership* focuses on recruiting, training, and coordinating volunteer services at school or off-campus school-related programming.

*Challenges*: Time and flexible schedules needed to recruit, train, coordinate, and monitor volunteers.

*Benefits*: Increased resources for the school (time and services) made available by the volunteers; increased feelings of being welcome and valued in school (by parents or community members); enhanced educational experience for students as a result of benefiting from the talents, skills, and attention contributed by the volunteers.

*…parents increased their volunteer efforts at the school and higher attendance levels at parent/teacher conferences if they received a home visit from the school welcoming committee, which included one parent and one staff person from the school.*

*Caplan et al., 1997*

### *4. Learning at Home*

The *learning at home partnership* involves parents in learning activities at home.

*Challenges*: Time for educators to design and debrief/correct interactive homework assignments or activities for students to take home.

*Benefits*: Increased level of homework completion and student self-confidence; enhanced capacity of parents to support and encourage their child as a learner; increased parental understanding of instructional program and what their child is learning; increased appreciation of their child's teachers' skills.

> *When parents learn to teach their own children, they not only give the children new skills, but also build their feelings of competence. This increased confidence, in turn, motivates the children to perform better.*
>
> *Caplan et al., 1997*

*Most schools conduct at least a few activities to involve families in their children's education, but most do not have a well-organized, goal-linked, and sustainable partnerhip program.*

*Epstein and Salinas, 2004*

### *5. Decision-Making*

The *decision-making partnership* includes parents in making decisions related to school policy, services, and programming.

*Challenges*: Time to identify parent and student representatives from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups that are part of the student body; time and financial resources to provide training that will prepare these parent and student leaders to serve as representatives of other families and students respectively.

*Benefits*: Increased awareness of and support for school policies and programming/services; increased student and parental confidence in the school having students' best interest at heart; enhanced relationships among all parties.

> *Gillum (1997) studied adoption of reading programs in three elementary districts…the district that involved parents in decisions about implementation of the program and strategies for reinforcement at home had significantly higher reading scores….Bromley (1972) found that when Head Start parents participated in program decision making, they were motivated to increase their own learning.*
>
> *Caplan et al., 1997*

### *6. Collaborating with the Community*

The *collaborating with the community partnership* focuses on identifying and developing resources/services that will "strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development" (Lockwood, 1998). Clearly, if there is to be collaboration between schools and the community, schools will need to incorporate some of the other types of involvement noted above,

such as providing opportunities for communication, volunteering, and shared decision-making with the larger community.

*Challenges*: Time and commitment to resolve turf issues related to collaborative activities, such as roles, responsibilities, financial resources, and organizational protocol (including sharing information); time to match business and community resources with school goals; time and funding to plan, promote, coordinate, and implement the collaborative services.

*Benefits*: Increased student capacities (e.g., skills, talents, academic achievement, self-esteem) as a result of enriched experiences; increased student understanding of potential career options; increased educational resources available to teachers; enhanced relationships among students, members of the community, and teachers; increased school awareness of community-based referral options/processes for families and children with special needs.

> *Communities offer a wide range of resources that are valuable to schools and the families they serve. These resources include people who volunteer their time in the school, organizations that offer enrichment opportunities, businesses that offer career-related information and workplace experiences, and agencies that provide various social services for students and families.*
>
> *North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.*

*...schools with business relationships had increased access to new technology, greater opportunities for professional development for teachers and other staff, and reduced student violence, truancy, suspension, and dropout rates.*

*Lucas Foundation, 2000*

## The Cost-Benefit Ratio of Partnerships

While there are challenges in creating and maintaining strong family-school-community partnerships, the potential benefits far outweigh the costs. Overall, the primary obstacle to creating partnerships seems to be "time"— time for communication, time for training, time for meeting and planning. Other challenges include limited financial resources, lack of trust, differing levels of understanding of issues, and "turf issues" related to roles and the need to share power.

> *Although the interactions of educators, parents, students, and community members will not always be smooth or successful, partnership programs establish a base of respect and trust on which to build. Good partnerships withstand questions, conflicts, debates, and disagreements; provide structures and processes to solve problems; and are maintained—even strengthened—after differences have been resolved.*
>
> *Epstein, 1995*

Lack of time is actually an underlying problem that affects most of the other obstacles identified above. Given an initial investment of time to develop trusting relationships and identify common goals, there's a very good chance that the partnerships have within them the capacity to resolve these other challenges—including ways to increase financial resources or human resources that translate into financial resources for schools! In addition to providing

volunteers and "adopting schools," community businesses can be sources of funding for programs and equipment (Bainbridge and Sundre, 1991).

## Why Partnerships?

> *Research conducted for over a decade indicates that when schools, families, and communities work together as partners, students benefit. Partnerships between schools, families, and communities can create safer school environments, strengthen parenting skills, encourage community service, improve academic skills, and achieve other desired goals that benefit students at all ages and grade levels.*
>
> *Sanders and Epstein, 1998*

*There are many reasons for developing school, family, and community partnerships. They can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work.*

*Epstein, 1995*

Children live in three environments: family, school, and community. The influence of these three environments was once thought to be "sequential," with the *family* being the first sphere of influence in a child's early years of development. The role of the family was to nurture and teach the child in preparation for their entry into school—at which time the *school* became the second major sphere of influence. The role of the school was to socialize and educate the child, in preparation for life as a productive adult citizen living in the *community,* the third sphere of influence. (Sanders and Epstein, 1998). The three environments were seen as somewhat "compartmentalized" in their roles and responsibilities, and a child moved in *sequence*, from one major sphere of influence to the next as they grew up.

Evidence of this belief system is reflected in the sharp delineation of roles and expectations often seen between families, schools, and communities. Parents are expected to raise their children, teaching them values and how to behave. Schools are expected to provide an academic education to students, teaching them math, science, and English—skills they'll need to financially support themselves as adults in the community. Until a youth graduates from school, there is often not much of a role for the community to play in their growth and social/educational development, with the exception of that which the church plays in the lives of some youth and families. In general, however, the boundaries between families, schools, and community institutions tend to limit opportunities for cross-sector collaboration on behalf of children (C.L.U.R.T. Reports, [*c*. 1998]).

Crossing the boundaries can be challenging. If parents try to get involved in issues considered to be part of the "school sphere," such as becoming actively involved in their child's education or issues related to school policy, they may feel unwelcome or find limited options for meaningful opportunities (Delores, 2000). If schools try to get involved in issues delegated to be part of the "family sphere," such as implementing strategies to prevent or intervene with high risk/problem behaviors (e.g., aggression, substance abuse, or teen sex), they may be admonished to "stick to teaching academics," and may face public/media challenges or litigation (School Services of California, Inc., Blattner, and

Sherman, 1998). Efforts for community institutions and agencies to take an active role in promoting the development and education of youth are often met with suspicion and resistance on the part of families and with few opportunities for involvement on the part of schools.

Clearly, each of these sectors has a major focus and unique contributions to make as a sphere of influence for healthy youth development. However, there is a growing body of research that indicates that the historical belief that these three powerful environments are separate compartments of a child's life, each exerting its influence in an orderly sequence, is *inaccurate*.

> *Recent synthesis of many studies…indicate that from infancy, the home, school, and community simultaneously affect children's growth and development.*
>
> *Sanders and Epstein, 1998 citing Wasik and Karweit, 1994; Young and Marx, 1992*

Perhaps the importance of developing strong family-school-community partnerships can best be understood through the framework of Epstein's three "overlapping spheres of influence" (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's model illustrates how the three contexts in which youth live *simultaneously interact* to impact their growth and development—including their attitudes, behaviors, and ultimate success in school. The framework of the model is illustrated by three circles, one for each of the environments. The student is located in the middle, where the circles overlap. The relative position of the circles and the degree to which they overlap are indicative of the nature of the relationships and partnerships between the three sectors.

*Epstein's idea of overlapping spheres is not an abstract notion, but a pragmatic model rooted in the complexities of contemporary society.*

*Lockwood. 1998*

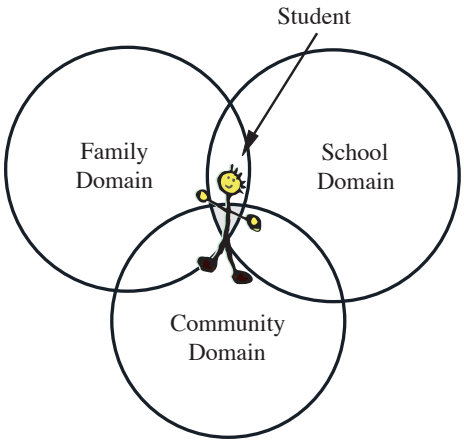



**Figure 4: Compartmentalized Family-School-Community Spheres**

If the circles are spread apart without much overlap in the middle, where the student is located, it indicates a compartmentalization and separation of the three spheres—reflecting a lack of effective partnerships and trusting relationships between the sectors.

*In some schools there are still educators who say. "If the family would just do its job, we could do our job." And there are still families who say, "I raised this child; now it is your job to educate her." These words embody the theory of "separate spheres of influence."*

*Epstein, 1995*

The result is an overall environment that is characterized by contradictory messages and a lack of alignment and sharing of resources—perhaps even relationships that are adversarial. These mixed messages promote feelings of stress and confusion in the minds of youth, undermining their ability to make healthy decisions regarding issues that will affect them for the rest of their lives, such as the value of education and whether or not to engage in chemical use or sexual activity.

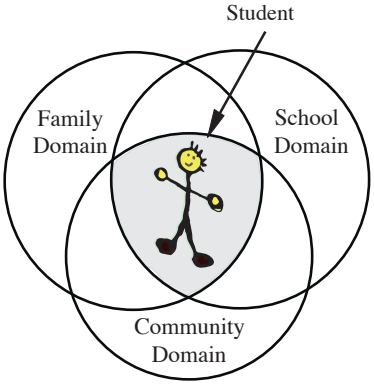



**Figure 5: Overlapping Family-School-Community Spheres**

If the circles are positioned close together and have a lot of overlap and shared space in the middle, it indicates the presence of collaborative partnerships and coordinated services—reflecting strong and mutually respectful relationships across the spheres.

*Other educators say, "I cannot do my job without the help of my students' families and the support of this community." And some parents say, "I really need to know what is happening in school in order to help my child." These phrases embody the theory of "overlapping spheres of influence."*

*Epstein, 1995*

The latter configuration of closely overlapping circles is one that takes optimal advantage of the *simultaneous influence* of the three spheres on behalf of healthy youth development. Youth benefit in a number of ways when there is alignment and collaboration across the three environments. One of the benefits of optimizing the power of the simultaneous influence is that youth receive consistent messages about important issues.

*With frequent interactions between schools, families, and communities, more students are more likely to receive common messages from various*

*It...means that there are abundant connections among family, school, and community resources in youths' lives: Parents are involved with schools, schools work seamlessly with community resources, and communities provide plentiful support and resources that strengthen families. The better those connections, the tighter the webs of influence and the harder it is for youth to "fall through the cracks."*

*Benson, Leffert, Scales, and Blyth, 1998*

> *people about the importance of school, of working hard, of thinking creatively, of helping one another, and of staying in school.*
>
> *Epstein, 1995*

The research conducted by Search Institute, based upon hundreds of thousands of youth who were surveyed across the U.S., also supports the importance of a consistent message across sectors:

> *…children and teenagers need to be exposed to similar messages about what is important and valued in many moments and many settings during their journey through the first two decades of life (Benson, 1997 citing Gardner, 1994). Unless socializing systems share a script about what is in-bounds and out-of-bounds, about values and expectations (integrity, honesty, fairness, respect, justice, caring, academic motivation), then youth experience only inconsistent, conflicted messages.*
>
> *Benson, 1997*

*When parents, teachers, and others convey similar messages about the importance of school, children are more likely to understand that they are expected to work hard and remain students.*

*Lockwood, 1998*

The cultivation of reinforcing messages from multiple sources can *increase protective factors* for youth. For example, consistent messages regarding behavioral standards will provide youth with *clear limits and boundaries*; they know where "the line" is and that it will be upheld at home, at school, and in the community—providing them with a sense of *physical and emotional safety*. Consistent messages regarding *high expectations* for youth to be successful and contributing members of their family, school, and community provide young people with confidence—and *hope*; people believe in their ability to contribute, learn, and achieve, and they are supported in their efforts to do so at home, at school, and in the community (Benard, 1992; Pittman, O'Brien, and Kimball, 1993).

Consciously utilizing the power of overlapping spheres can also *increase availability of human and financial resources* by allowing each environment to draw upon the resources and strengths of the other sectors on behalf of youth. In the best of times, schools cannot be expected to meet *all* the needs of their students. However, during times of limited resources (e.g., time, funding, educational and support services), having collaborative parent and community partnerships can make the critical difference in whether or not students will receive the support they need to be successful in school and in life.

> *The nation's schools must improve education for all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if schools, families, and communities work together to promote successful students.*
>
> *Epstein and Sanders, [c. 1999]*

While strong partnerships will benefit all students, they are most critical for those who are involved in high-risk behaviors, many of which lead to suspension and expulsion. These students frequently receive services from a variety of agencies. Without partnerships, communication is limited or non-

existent between the family, school, and community agencies. Thus, no one has the "big picture," resulting in services that are fragmented and strategies that may even be at odds with each other. Partnerships can *provide a framework of communication that promotes alignment and mutually supportive strategies across spheres*. This is crucial for students who might otherwise slip through the cracks as a result of disconnected efforts to help.

## How Do We Create Strong Partnerships?

> *For a partnership to work, there must be mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities.*
>
> *North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d. citing Ballen and Moles, 1994*

Creating a partnership where there is "mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities" may seem like a formidable task, especially in view of the fact that family-school-community partnerships by definition, will bring together many people with very different backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives. How does a school go about creating that kind of partnership? The answer is by developing *relationships*—by investing the time it takes to make meaningful "connections" with parents and community members. It's about developing "social capital"—an "elusive concept [that] refers to the quality of relationships among and between people" (Lockwood, n.d.). Sometimes the best way to understand a concept that is "elusive" is to describe its opposite:

*Social capital adheres in the set of relationships among people and those relationships are productive to the extent that they are based on a common set of expectations, a set of shared values, and a sense of trust among people.*

*Lockwood, n.d.*

> *…a lack of social capital can be seen if people have abandoned hope of working as a team, where individual goals are pursued without thought of the collective good, and where the quality of relationships among staff at best is superficially cordial—without any deeper bonding or trust that colleagues can be relied upon or even that they share a common philosophy.*
>
> *Lockwood, n.d.*

Development of social capital is really the ultimate goal of school partnerships with families and the communities; it's really the only way to overcome the erosion of trust that too frequently has pitted schools into adversarial relationships with families and social service agencies (Lockwood, n.d.).

The rationale for the following suggestions regarding developing strong partnerships that are rich in social capital is a synthesis of research that is largely based upon the work of Joyce L. Epstein, Peter Senge, Michael Fullan, Richard W. Riley, and a document developed by the North Central Regional Laboratory, Putting the Pieces Together: Comprehensive School-Linked Strategies for Children and Families. Books and articles by the authors and documents cited are worthwhile reading in their entirety as sources for additional information

regarding partnerships and collaboration. While no one has created a foolproof blueprint for creating a network of strong partnerships, extensive research and fieldwork can provide us with some guidance that can help us learn from the experience of others. A good starting place is to develop an action team for partnerships.

> *With a clear focus on promoting student success, the team writes annual plans for family and community involvement, implements and evaluates activities, and integrates the activities conducted by other groups and individual teachers into a comprehensive partnership program for the school.*
>
> *Epstein and Salinas, 2004*

*In a truly collaborative effort, partners relate to each other on a non-hierarchical basis, regardless of the organizational structure (Jehl and Kirst, 1992)....You can promote this balance by setting goals...that are broader than the goals of any participating agency or individual and cannot be reached through the efforts of any single group.*

*North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.*

### *1. Develop an Action Team for Partnerships.*

The purpose of the action team is to provide leadership by performing the following tasks: identify shared goals, assess needs, identify resources, develop an action plan, and evaluate effectiveness. (Each of these will be discussed in more detail below.) The action team should be formally linked with an existing school entity that has overlapping goals, such as a school improvement team (Epstein and Salinas, 2004). This will help to "institutionalize" the team—and with it, the entire initiative of working in partnership with the larger community. It will give the team a framework in which to work, credibility, and will help ensure its long-term survival. Following are some general suggestions for developing the action team:

- *Get broad-based representation.*

  Include teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members from a variety of sectors (e.g., businesses, human service agencies, churches, and youth-serving organizations).

- *Get formal commitments to the partnership.*

  Written agreements help to solidify the commitment to the partnership. When working with organizations, it can be helpful to have a specific person designated to represent them; it promotes a higher level of participation and responsibility. Epstein recommends having each party sign a "parallel" form of the agreement.

  > *Pledges, compacts, or contracts are symbolic agreements that formally recognize that students, families, teachers, and administrators must work together to help students succeed….By signing parallel pledges, everyone becomes aware of their common goals, shared responsibilities, and personal commitments.*
  >
  > *Epstein et al., 2002*

- *Establish the partnership structure and procedures.*

  A two-tiered structure that includes a small "management team" (10-15 people) and a larger "oversight group" (30-50 people) has been found to be effective. The management team is small enough to respond quickly to short term concerns and the oversight group is large enough to ensure diversity and long-term guidance from the larger community (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, n.d.). In addition to community representation, Epstein recommends having "at least three teachers from different grade levels, three parents with children in different grade levels, and at least one administrator…others who are central to the school's work may also be included as members, such as a cafeteria worker, a school social worker, a counselor, or a school psychologist" (Epstein, 1995).

  Establish meeting formats and a decision-making process that ensures authentic input and shared power. There are many meeting formats to choose from, ranging from Roberts Rules of Order to some that are less formal. (A sample of a "flexibly structured" format is included in the Resource Section.) Determine which form of decision-making (or combination of forms) will best serve the partnership's needs: group consensus, committee decision-making, or majority rule.

***2. Provide Training.***

*Recent studies and reviews of literature indicate that most colleges and universities do little to prepare most teachers and administrators to conduct school, family, and community partnerships.*
*Epstein et al., 1999*

As a result of the growing body of research and federal and state legislation that call for schools to collaborate with families and communities, educators' awareness of the importance of partnerships has grown. However, educators' preparedness to work in partnerships has not grown proportionately.

> *Just about all teachers and administrators would like to involve families, but many do not know how to go about building positive and productive programs and are consequently fearful about trying. This creates a "rhetoric rut," in which educators are stuck, expressing support for partnerships without taking any action.*
>
> *Epstein, 1995*

In a survey conducted with 161 schools, colleges, and departments of education across the country, the data indicated that educational leaders held strong beliefs regarding the value of partnerships. They held equally strong beliefs that educators needed to be better prepared to work in partnership with parents and the community (Epstein, Sanders, Clark, and Johns Hopkins University, 1999). The reality is, however, that few administrators or teachers receive this training.

> *Recent studies and reviews of literature and practice indicate that most colleges and universities do little to prepare most teachers and administrators to conduct school, family, and community partnerships.*

*Epstein et al., 1999*

In order for partnerships to be productive, effective, and long-lived, its members need to have training. Educators will benefit from training in effective ways to work in partnership with parents, and the members of the action team will benefit from training on a variety of issues relevant to student success and effective teamwork.

- *Provide training to administrators and teachers to develop strong partnerships with parents.*

  While there is widespread agreement among both educators and parents that parent involvement is important for students' success, in reality, there is a often a feeling of "disconnect" between educators and parents (Ballen and Moles, [2004?]). This can happen for a variety of reasons: parents may feel unwelcome, like the teacher "talks down to them" or in "educational jargon they can't understand," or they may have had a personal history with school that was negative (Riley, 1994). On the other hand, teachers may feel disrespected by parents, unsupported in dealing with behavioral problems in school, or they may not know how to relate to non-English speaking or minority culture parents. The list could go on and on.

  The bottom line is this: The big winners in closer collaboration between educators and parents are the *students*. A significant body of research indicates the benefits of *school-parent partnerships* as a protective factor: increased student achievement, improved attendance, fewer discipline problems, and higher educational aspirations (Caplan et al., 1997).

  The first step is to recognize the disconnection and the resulting lack of trust many parents feel—and the need for training in the following major areas:

*Since the first contact a parent has with his or her child's school is often negative, some districts are making sure the first contact with parents is a positive one.*
*Ballen and Moles, [2004?]*

  - Family systems and the impact of stressors on family members (including chemical dependency)
  - Cultural or language differences
  - Effective communication skills (including conflict resolution and de-escalation skills)
  - Strategies to increase trust and establish common goals regarding the student's success (for example, making early contacts regarding their child's positive behavior or accomplishments so the parents' first contact with school isn't when their child is in trouble; taking time to talk with parents about their hopes for their child; meeting in a neutral place or the parents' home; accommodating parents' work schedule)

*The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families.*

*Epstein, 1995*

*Schools have a vested interest in becoming true learning communities. They are now accountable for <u>all</u> students' learning [with the] No Child Left Behind Act.*

*Epstein and Salinas, 2004*

The ultimate goal of training is to help educators find ways to more effectively communicate "caring" to parents and "connect" with them as partners—to help parents see they have their child's best interest at heart and they want to work together to help their child be successful in school and life.

- *Provide training to members of the action team to work together as partners in a "learning community."*

  *For partnerships to work, there must be mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities.*

  *Riley, 1994*

  The above description of working partnerships is an excellent definition of a *learning community.* But trust and respect, agreement on goals and strategies, and a willingness to share rights and responsibilities don't "just happen" in a group. It's unrealistic to think that a diverse group, coming from potentially very diverse starting points, can work together as an effective and productive learning community without some preparation. And yet, the ultimate success of a functional partnership depends upon those things being in place.

  There is one additional aspect that is fundamental to a learning community: A learning community is, by definition, a group of individuals who are continually *learning*—with and from each other. Training can help provide a common foundation of understanding, which will pave the way to creating a shared vision of the partnership's mission and goals. Many forms of learning experiences constitute "training," for example, outside presenters, "jig saw" activities where different members contribute a *piece* of information that is part of a larger whole, or informal sharing from members regarding potential resources and relevant areas of expertise. Having a basic working knowledge of the following topics can help teams make informed decisions regarding strategies to promote student success:

  - *High-risk behaviors* that can interfere with student success and healthy youth development (e.g., drug use/chemical dependency, depression/suicide, truancy)
  - *Protective factors* that can promote student success and healthy youth development (e.g., any of the strength-based models such as Search Institute's asset development research, resiliency research, Karen Pittman's research regarding basic needs that are essential

for healthy youth development)

- *Learning communities and the change process* that can help partnerships work together effectively as teams and change agents (e.g., the work of Peter Senge and Michael Fullan)
- *Neuroscience-based learning strategies* that can help teachers create learning environments that are more engaging and "brain-friendly," so that students are more likely to be successful learners (e.g., the work of Rich Allen, Pat Wolfe, Eric Jensen, David Sousa, Bobbie LaPorter)

***3) Assess the Present Strengths and Needs.***

*Visions come later for two reasons. First...one needs a good deal of reflective experience before one can form a plausible vision....Second, shared vision...must evolve through the dynamic interaction of organizational members and leaders. This takes time...*

*Fullan, 1993*

Whether in the woods or on the open sea, the first rule of navigation is, "Find out where you are." Only when you know your starting point, can you determine a course of travel that will get you to a desired goal. Conducting an assessment of strengths and needs will give a partnership its starting point. An assessment can be conducted in a variety of ways. The action team can develop and implement a short survey, conduct focus groups, or conduct interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, and students. The *Effective Schools Survey* (which provides a measure of *Quality Leadership, Positive School Climate,* and *Effective Instruction* in the school), and Epstein's *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* (which provides an assessment of the six types of involvement) are two instruments that could be useful. (See Resource Section.) School records regarding attendance, suspension and expulsion, grades, etc. could also provide valuable information.

***4) Create a Shared Vision.***

New organizations often start out creating a vision statement that represents the group's "shared" vision, then they work together to make it real. Peter Senge, who has conducted extensive research on organizational change in schools and businesses, states that this process is backward. In order to be meaningful as a driving force, a shared vision must evolve out of the members' individual visions. This cannot happen without lots of dialogue and discussion—*before* anyone attempts to verbalize the groups' shared vision. That's why it is important for newly formed groups to take time to simply get to know each other, learn about relevant issues, and gather information regarding strengths and needs. As they engage in conversation, sharing their perspectives, ideas, and feelings, the elements of a shared vision that is authentic will begin to emerge as members find the common ground. *That* is the point at which a group can begin to articulate its shared vision and the goals that can help them turn it into reality (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, and Kleiner, 2000).

***5) Identify Resources in the Community that Could Be Tapped to Meet the Needs.***

Once the goals and areas of need have been identified and prioritized, it is time to begin the process of identifying possible sources of support within the community: parents, businesses, social service agencies, community/civic organizations, youth serving groups, etc. Some organizations already have a mindset of providing services; some organizations will need some prompting regarding how their involvement could eventually benefit them or the larger community. Prior to approaching a person or organization, plan ahead. Consider what potential benefits might there be for them to participate or provide a resource.

> *Increasingly, corporations are investing in public elementary and secondary schools. Of principal concern to corporate leaders is assuring a literate, confident and motivated workforce capable of meeting the business challenges of today's technological workplace.*
>
> *Bainbridge and Sundre, 1991*

Ten major types of business participation have been identified (Bainbridge and Sundre, 1991):

1. Internships
2. Academic skill training
3. Career planning
4. School site assistance (miscellaneous)
5. Scholarships
6. Program grants
7. Volunteerism (corporate)
8. Mentorship
9. Equipment Grants
10. Adopt-a-school

*Epstein is particularly emphatic that a rigid, prescriptive template for partnerships placed over widely varying schools will not be effective. Instead [fit] school/family/community partnerships to the goals and needs of individual schools and their constituents...."They begin a process."*

*Lockwood, 1998*

Exploring possibilities for business collaboration to find the right match in a partnership between the corporation's expectations and the school's needs is a determining factor in its ultimate success. This is especially critical when considering the adopt-the-school option. While this is one of the most popular types of corporate involvement with schools, it is also one of the most disappointing for corporations. The identified reason for "poor marks" given by corporations that were surveyed is that there was not a good match in the types of services provided by the adopting business and the interests of the teachers and students. "…a student interested in mathematics and computer science assigned to a school ‘adopted' by the Museum of Art is not necessarily going

to benefit from the arrangement. Likewise, teachers tend to work best with corporate ‘adopters' with specialties in their areas of interest" (Bainbridge and Sundre, 1991). On the other hand, adopt-a-school can be extremely successful with magnet schools that have a matching area of specialization.

***6) Develop an Annual Action Plan.***

Develop an action plan with goals based upon the shared vision and identified needs. (The six types of involvement identified by Epstein can be used as a comprehensive framework for the action plan, i.e., Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-making, and Collaborating with the Community.) Having a written plan with goals, objectives, and activities/ strategies that are coordinated across sectors for achieving the goals can help a partnership stay focused and on task. It is important to have both long and short-term goals. The long-term goals identify components of the partnership's vision, providing them with a sense of purpose and a direction. Short-term goals can be an effective way for partnerships to measure early successes, thus providing a feeling of progress that can sustain the team while it continues to work toward the long-term goals.

If the action team is part of an existing school entity, such as the school improvement team that develops an annual plan of its own, incorporating the partnership plan into the larger plan can be beneficial. This will provide the partnership with a closer link with the school as an institution.

*As support from school, family, and community accumulates, significantly more students feel secure and cared for, understand the goals of education, work to achieve to their full potential, build positive attitudes and school behaviors, and stay in school.*

*Epstein, 1995*

While an action plan with goals and objective are important because they provide a focus, it is equally important not to let an action plan become limiting. There needs to be flexibility so the plan can be adjusted when there is a change in needs or resources!

***7) Evaluate Progress and Assess Future Needs.***

Some of the same instruments and sources of information that were used to initially assess the strengths and needs can be used on a periodic basis to assess progress, identify necessary changes, and/or new needs. It is helpful to keep in mind that authentic systems change is a slow process. According to Michael Fullan, systems change at the elementary level takes approximately five years, at the secondary level it takes seven years, and at the district level, it takes nine years. Those time frames can be reduced if participants have a clear understanding of organizational change; however, even then, it is a process that requires a long-term commitment.

***8) Celebrate!***

It is easy to lose perspective of progress made, especially if the focus is kept on long-term goals. Take time regularly to reflect on successes, even small successes, and celebrate. And, if the evaluation does not reflect the hoped for changes, celebrate the partnership's efforts and the lessons learned—and return

to the drawing board to determine if the strategies being used are sound and need more time, or if it is time to adjust the action plan.

## Summary

The research findings are redundant and crystal clear: everything from student behavior and academic achievement to programmatic and financial support of schools will benefit from strong family-school-community partnerships that result in a "school learning community."

> *…a "school learning community" includes educators, students, parents, and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities. One component of a school learning community is an organized program of school, family, and community partnerships with activities linked to school goals. Research and fieldwork show that such programs improve schools, strengthen families, invigorate community support, and increase student achievement and success (Epstein, 2001; Henderson and Mapp, 2002; Sheldon, 2003).*
>
> *Epstein and Salinas, 2004*

## Additional Resources

1. Epstein, Joyce L, Mavis G. Sanders, Beth S. Simon, Karen Clark Salinas, Natalie Rodriguez Jansorn, and Frances L. VanVoorhis. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*. Corwin Press, 2002.

   This 377-page book is probably the most comprehensive book ever written about partnerships! It includes research findings, theory, case studies/ stories, action steps and practical suggestions, checklists, worksheets/ planning forms, and assessment tools. It can be an invaluable tool for a partnership action team.

2. Riley, Richard W. *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1994.

   This is one of the most comprehensive and best sources of information on family-school-community partnerships. Unfortunately, the web source is discontinued, but some Michigan libraries have it.

3. Families Worldwide. "Strong Families, Strong Schools." *Key Research Findings*, n.d. 801-562-6185.

   This three-page document provides a very succinct overview of key benefits and obstacles related to family involvement in schools.

4. Lockwood, Anne Turnbaugh. "Linking Families, Schools, and Communities: An Interview with Joyce L. Epstein." *CC-VI Forum*, 3.3,

Fall 1998. <http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/ccvi/pub/newsletter/Fall1998_ParentsSchsWorkingTogether/LinkingFamilies_Schools_Communities.html>.

This is an excellent overview of Epstein's research regarding family-school-community partnerships along with recommendations for developing successful partnerships.

5. Ballen, Jennifer and Oliver Moles. "Promoting Family Involvement." [2004?]. Reading Rockets. <http://www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=58>.

   This three-page article provides a listing of practical tips for educators to promote family involvement.

6. The Council for Corporate and School Partnerships. [*c*. 2002] "A How-To Guide for School-Business Partnerships." <http://www.corpschoolpartners.org/guide.shtml>.

   This is a great resource designed to assist schools in learning how to create, implement, sustain or evaluate a school-business partnership. It includes helpful worksheets, checklists, and self-assessments. It can be downloaded by doing a search for the title. If you have a problem downloading these documents, contact Southard Davis at 202.884.7306, or at southard.davis @widmeyer.com.

# Community Domain: Community Service Projects

**Key Question**: ***How can community service benefit suspended and expelled students?***

## Introduction to Community Service

> *Community service activities offer young people an opportunity to become involved in constructive activities outside of school that benefit both themselves and the people they are serving.*
>
> *LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, and Taylor, 1996*

Community service is one of two major types of *service programs* where individuals, as part of a structured program, engage in activities designed to contribute in some way to the well being of the community. The second type of service programs is "service learning." Service learning is very similar to community service, with the main difference being it is formally integrated into the school curriculum, has specific academic objectives, and carries class credit. (It will be described in more detail in a later section.)

*Youth development occurs in an environment that extends well beyond the school doors.*
*Pittman and Cahill, 1991*

There are three types of community service that can be provided (Taylor, 2004):

1. *Direct Services* (e.g., providing services directly to the people in need of assistance, such as tutoring children, helping in a nursing home, providing chore service, working in a preschool or day care center)
2. *Indirect Services* (e.g., working to make a difference through an indirect means, such as painting a homeless shelter, sorting food in a food distribution center, helping with mailings for a non-profit organization, fundraisers or blood bank drives)
3. *Advocacy Services* (e.g., working on behalf of a social issue or community concern or need, such as raising money for a cause or a population in need of help, getting involved with the political process, promoting social justice or environmental improvements)

All three types of service have merit and can provide powerful learning experiences to youth on the importance of being dependable, organized, and using pro-social interpersonal skills. Providing direct services to people needing help can be particularly useful to youth who might benefit from developing more empathy. It helps "put their own issues in a larger context" and they can readily see that their efforts make a difference. Participation in advocacy activities is particularly effective in helping students learn how to be "persistent and persuasive" (Taylor, 2004).

## Why Community Service for Suspended and Expelled Students?

> *No matter what type of youth service is studied, the research on the benefits is consistent across socioeconomic groups. [A] well-designed [program] promotes academic achievement, competence, self-confidence, and self-esteem. It creates empathy for others and builds skills in problem solving and in working cooperatively (Grant Commission, 1988). Service opportunities stimulate skills specifically useful for future employment…punctuality and reliability, responsibility for task completion, getting along with others, and good grooming (Harrison, 1987).*
>
> *Lewis, 1992*

*[Teens] need increased attention, guidance, and help from adults as distinct from control and punishment.*
*Nichols and Good, 2004*

There's a good chance that if a student has been suspended or expelled, they have significant deficits in many of the skill areas mentioned above that are so important for academic achievement and successful employment. During a suspension or expulsion, not only do they lose the opportunity to learn any of these skills, they also lose the adult guidance, supervision, and daily structure that school provides for them *at a time when they need it most*. As previously noted, this creates a dangerous void in their lives that significantly elevates their risk for a variety of problem behaviors, including academic failure, chemical use, teen sex, and anti-social/criminal activities (Clark et al., 2003; Nichols, Ludwin, and Iadicola, 1999).

> *[Students who are suspended or expelled are] exposed to a disciplinary process which was neither structured with the student's best interest in mind nor designed to meet their academic and non-academic needs.… As a result, those students who require the most supervision are, in fact, the least likely to receive it.*
>
> *McDonald-Brown and Birrane, 1994*

Participation in programming where they contribute a valued service to the community can provide suspended and expelled students with an opportunity for a meaningful learning experience that can increase their intellectual, social, and psychological competencies as well as their "political efficacy and citizenship" (Perkins and Miller, 2002). It can also provide them with a structural framework that gives them adult guidance and supervision while they are out of the school community. Research conducted by Perkins and Miller on "well-designed youth community service" programs cite the following positive effects in the lives of adolescents:

- Intellectual Development and Academic Learning
  - Basic academic skills (expressing ideas, reading, calculating)
  - Higher-level thinking skills (open-mindedness, problem-solving, decision-making, and critical thinking)

  - Content and skills directly related to service experiences
  - Skill in learning from experience (to observe, ask questions, apply knowledge)
  - Development of positive attitude toward learning
  - Skill in working in teams
  - Insight, judgment, understanding the nuances that cannot be explained in a book or lecture but are often the most important things of all

- Social Development
  - Social responsibility and concern for the welfare of others
  - Political efficacy
  - Civic participation
  - Knowledge and exploration of service-related careers
  - Understanding and appreciation of, and ability to relate to, people from a wider range of backgrounds and life situations

*Researchers have reported the value of [community service] on children's sense of personal and social responsibility, self-esteem, attitudes toward adults, and investment in school (Lewis, 1988)*

*LoSciuto et al., 1996*

- Psychological Development
  - Self-esteem
  - Personal efficacy (sense of worth and competence)
  - Ego and moral development
  - Exploration of new roles, identities and interests
  - Willingness to take risks and accept new challenges
  - Sense of usefulness, purpose and belonging
  - Revised and reinforced values and beliefs
  - Taking responsibility for and accepting consequences of one's own actions
- Adolescents' Political Efficacy and Citizenship
  - Sense of responsibility to contribute to society
  - Democratic participation (informed citizen, exercises voting privileges)
  - Skills in identifying community problems and needs
  - Organizational skills
  - Social action skills (persuasion, policy research, petitioning)
  - Empowerment, belief in ability to make a difference

While suspended and expelled students undoubtedly will benefit from the opportunity to develop the above skills, there are two additional benefits that can be derived from community service. They are two powerful protective factors that are particularly important when considering the needs of this population:

1. *Students will experience increased feelings of bonding to their school and community.*

   Students who are suspended or expelled characteristically feel alienated and unwanted in school (Jordan, Lara, McPartland, 1998). Feelings of disconnection and not being valued extend to the community as well, especially if the student has been involved with the juvenile justice system. The message they tend to internalize is one of *personal* rejection by their school and community. However, when the school and community work together as partners to provide students with supportive services during their suspension or expulsion, it sends a very different message: their *behavior* is not acceptable, but the school and community *care* about them and want to *give them a way back*.

   If students form positive relationships with the people who are part of a community service experience, they will feel cared about, valued, and supported—resulting in increased feelings of attachment and bonding to those people and the institutions they represent. Bonding to the school and community are key protective factors in preventing a host of high-risk behaviors (Hawkins, Catalano, and Associates, 1992). Providing opportunities for suspended and expelled students to connect with their school and community through community service not only can help give them "a way back" in school, it can empower them to make a positive difference in their neighborhoods and lives as well.

   *Even young people who appear most disaffected have big ideas about how to improve their neighborhoods and their lives….If you give them a chance, they can accomplish a lot.*

   *Wheeler, 2004*

2. *Students may discover a career interest through their community service experience.*

   Youth need to believe they have a positive future. Hundreds of studies in resiliency indicate that tremendous adversity can be overcome when young people have a goal and believe they can achieve it (Henderson and Milstein, 1996). The need to have a sense of "power, purpose, and promise" is also supported by the research conducted by Search Institute (Benson, 1997).

   When care is taken to match a student's interest areas with their community service placement, it can help them identify employment-related interests and competencies, perhaps even a specific career goal. As a result, when they return to school, they are likely to be more motivated to complete their education in order to achieve their goals.

## Five Critical Elements of a Well-Designed Community Service Program

The research indicating the positive effects of community service is specific to what they identify as "well-designed" community service programs (Perkins and Miller, [2000?]). Without certain elements, the same outcomes cannot be anticipated. The "five critical elements" described below are fundamental aspects of a well-designed program. They are based on the format of a national model of community service developed by Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) (COOL, 1999) that is used on college campuses across the country. Compatible research findings from the evaluation of the Across Ages Program have been incorporated to provide more detailed descriptions (Taylor, 2004). Key questions are included after the description of each critical element that can be used as a mental checklist when planning the infrastructure of a program.

### *1. Community and Student Input*

Gather information and work collaboratively. It is critical to gather input from the community site and the student to ensure that their respective interests, needs, and capacities are taken into consideration when planning placements. This can probably best be done through a combination of written surveys/ assessments and face-to-face meetings. As noted in the preceding chapter, the identified reason for corporate dissatisfaction with the "adopt-a-school" type of partnerships was the lack of a good match in the types of services provided by the adopting business and the interest of the students and teachers (Bainbridge and Sundre, 1991). Actually, the more collaborative the project is throughout all its phases (i.e., information gathering, planning, implementation, and evaluation), the more likely it is to be successful.

> *Community voice is essential if we are to build bridges, make changes, and solve problems.*
>
> *COOL, 1999*

*The main thing about meaningful choice is that it engenders willingness....It leaves them feeling as if you are responsive to them as individuals.... It decreases their alienation.*

*Deci and Flaste, 1996*

When trying to motivate suspended and expelled students to actively participate in community service and be receptive to learning new attitudes and skills, it is critical to consider students' need for personal autonomy. Edward Deci's research has provided critical information regarding people's "motivational processes." He concludes that the issue of autonomy is at the heart of "why we do what we do, and [his research provides us] with a basis for addressing concrete and practical questions such as how to promote responsible behaviors" (1996). There is abundant data that supports the importance of people feeling they have some control and choice in their lives. Any opportunity that can be given to students to have input, be actively involved, and participate in making choices—even small choices—throughout the planning process is likely to pay huge dividends in the outcome of the experience. The results of a study conducted by Edward Deci demonstrate this point:

> *The opportunity to make even these small choices had made a difference in their experience and had strengthened their intrinsic motivation. Once again, it was the issue of autonomy versus control…that was at the heart of the matter. People who were asked to do a particular task but allowed the freedom of having some say in how to do it were more fully engaged by the activity—they enjoyed it more—than people who were not treated as unique individuals.*
>
> *Deci and Flaste, 1996*

In addition to talking to the student to get their input, use of a career aptitude or interest test and/or a review of their Educational Development Plan will provide valuable information that can help identify the type of placement most likely to provide the greatest learning opportunity. In order to ensure the best possible match, it is helpful to have a variety of community service placements available.

*Orientation and training of staff representing the organization selected as the community service partner builds a bridge with the lead agency and helps to insure successful implementation of the service activities…*
*Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

*Key Questions Regarding Information Gathering:*

- What are the needs and resources of potential community partners?
- What are the needs, interests, skills and goals of the student?

***2. Orientation and Training***

Provide the community partner and the student with the information and skills they need to be successful. This is often the part that "gets left out" of a community service project (Taylor, 2004). However, just as we would not plant a garden without first preparing the soil, both the people at the community service site and the student need adequate orientation and training to prepare them to work together effectively toward their respective goals. Every aspect of the project needs to be clearly defined and communicated to all parties regarding what is expected from them as part of the orientation and training. This will avoid confusion and help ensure the overall success of the project. If mentoring is part of the community service project, the student's mentor will also need training. (Mentoring as a way to enhance community service will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.)

> *It is crucial to prepare your group for each service experience to increase the likelihood that there will be positive outcomes for both community members and student participants.*
>
> *University of Maryland, 2001*

The Urban Institute identifies the following "entry level skills" as being required by employers: speaking and listening skills, an understanding of systems and their interrelated procedures, the ability to react constructively to positive or negative criticism, good work habits, and the ability to work well as a member of a team, use information systems, and set priorities (Lerman, 1996). For students having significant deficits in interpersonal/teamwork or coping skills,

implementation of life skills lessons might be an important component of the training they receive. This could include an entire curriculum or selected lessons, depending upon the needs of the student. There are numerous research-based life skills curricula available that could be used. As demonstrated in an evaluation of Across Ages, a life skills curriculum can enhance the impact of community service, particularly when used in conjunction with mentoring (LoSciuto et al., 1996).

> *A well-orchestrated life skills curriculum…can convey valuable information to youth and give them the opportunity to reflect on their own behaviors and experiences. Activities that get the children up out of their chairs and encourage them to express themselves are particularly effective.*
>
> *LoSciuto et al., 1996*

*Key Questions to Address in the Orientation and Training:*

- What are the goals and needs of the community partner and the student?
- How can the community partner benefit from the student's help?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each of the parties involved?
- What forms of assessment do we need to assess student's career interests and aptitudes?
- What skills does the student need to fulfill their role and responsibilities, and what support is available for essential skill-development?
- What are some of the student's strengths and challenges related to this placement, and how will they be supported to overcome any challenges?
- Who can the student and community partner go to if they need help?
- How can the partner support the student to be successful in this placement?

### *3. Meaningful Action*

Choose only service placements that are meeting a legitimate need. It is important that the service being provided is meaningful and addresses a legitimate need. This is true for both the community partner and the student. Without this, one or the other will stop participating. There needs to be "mutuality of experience" (Taylor, 2004). In other words, the community service is mutually meaningful and beneficial.

*Without [meaningful action], people will not want to continue their service…*
*COOL, 1999*

*Key Questions Regarding Meaningful Action:*

- How can we convey to the student the value of contributing this service?

- How can we convey to the community partner the value of serving as a site?
- How can we acknowledge the accomplishments of the student and the community partner throughout the project?

***4. Structured Reflection***

> *Without reflection, community service becomes something they did; with reflection, it becomes something they learned from.*
>
> *Taylor, 2004*

Provide an opportunity for students to reflect upon their service experience. Structured reflection is the component of community service designed to facilitate learning. Evaluations of youth service programs and research in neuroscience related to the "biology of learning" both reinforce the concept that people need time to reflect upon new information and experiences. Having time to see how a new experience or information relates to prior learning and how it fits into their lives helps students find relevance and meaning. It solidifies the learning, making it more likely that students will apply the knowledge and skills in other situations (Wolfe, 2001).

*Both the quantitative and qualitative results suggest that providing students with an opportunity to process the service experience with each other is a powerful component of both community service and service learning.*

*Astin et al., 2000*

An additional outcome of reflection with respect to community service is that it helps develop a sense of social responsibility (Taylor and Bressler, 2000). It promotes good citizenship, i.e., the ability to be a successful and contributing member of a school, community, and a democratic society.

> *The service experience makes a greater impact and has more meaning for children when they have an opportunity to discuss their activities with adults and think seriously about what they have accomplished and what they may be fearful of. This is an extremely important aspect… and should not be overlooked or ignored.*
>
> *Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

Ideally, the adult-guided reflection takes place after each service experience. When possible, facilitate the reflection step with a group of students so they can learn from each other's experience as well as their own (Taylor, 2004). Reflection can take a variety of forms, such as engaging in a discussion, participating in a role-play, completing a writing or art project, journaling, or developing a PowerPoint or videotape presentation. Following is a sample of some questions that can be used to guide student reflection. They are part of a menu from which to choose, based upon the situation and desired learning goals. (Most of the following questions are taken from the *Across Ages Program Development Manual* written by Taylor and Sonkowsky, 1998.)

*Key Questions for Structured Reflection with Students:*

- What service did you provide?
- What did you observe?

- Do you feel you made a difference?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What obstacles did you encounter? How did you overcome them?
- What are you learning about yourself?
- What are you learning about the people you are working with?
- How do you think you are perceived?
- How do your preconceptions affect your work?
- Has your role changed over time?
- Has your definition of "service" changed?
- How does your service connect to broader social issues?
- How does your service experience connect to other areas of your life?
- What skills or insights have you gained that can help you in other areas of your life?

*Many students volunteer and perform community service, but are unable to connect what they did with what they learned from it.*

*University of California, n.d.*

Providing the community partner with opportunities for reflection is also valuable. The reflection component provides an opportunity to share one's thoughts and feelings about what is happening. It is simply a form of meaningful and authentic communication—an essential component of any collaborative partnership.

> *Because school-community collaboration is a process and not an event, it is important that partners take the time to reflect on and evaluate the quality of their interactions and the implementation of their partnership activities.*
>
> *Epstein et al., 2002*

*Key Questions for Structured Reflection with Community Partners:*

- What worked well and what did not?
- Did you get the help and support you needed? If not, what else could have helped?
- What impact has your participation in the community service placement had on you and your organization's mission?
- What if any impact did you observe in the student?
- What might we do differently next time so it works better?

### *5. Evaluation and Celebration*

Assess the impact of the service project on the student and the community site and celebrate successes. An evaluation conducted at the end of the community service project will provide data that assesses the short-term impact on the student's attitudes, behavior, and any skill development that was targeted. The long-term impact can be monitored through school academic and disciplinary records, and occasional follow-up meetings over the course of the year. A student's mentor can also be a good source of information regarding short and long-term impact.

*The simplest way to design an evaluation plan is to find a statement of the program's goals and objectives...and then ask how many have been achieved....*

*Taylor and Gressler, 2000*

Assessing the impact on the community site also provides valuable data. If the evaluation indicates the community partner found the placement helpful, it will validate to the student they fulfilled a meaningful and legitimate need. If the evaluation indicates there were shortcomings in some area of the project, the data provided can guide efforts to make necessary changes. Either way, any information gained through evaluation is helpful—it can either be used to improve the level of future effectiveness or provide a good reason to celebrate!

> *Evaluation measures the impact of the student's learning experience and the effectiveness of the service in the community….Evaluation gives direction for improvement, growth, and change.*
>
> *COOL, 1999*

Acknowledging efforts and celebrating successes will boost the student's sense of self-esteem and competency, thus reinforcing the learning, and it will provide the community partner with well-earned recognition and a feeling of being appreciated, thus strengthening the partnership.

*Key Questions Regarding Evaluation and Celebration:*

- What existing forms of data collection for student behavior can we use to monitor program effectiveness?
- What other modes of data collection would be useful (e.g., instruments/ surveys, interviews)?
- How can we assess the impact and level of satisfaction of the community partner (e.g., instruments/surveys, interviews)?
- How can we acknowledge and celebrate effort and successes (e.g., letters, certificates, celebration/party)?

## Framing Community Service for Success

Some students might have a negative reaction when offered the opportunity to participate in community service during a suspension or expulsion. The reasons for this are understandable given the historical context.

> *And even here in Michigan…when asked what is community service, student after student in this state replied—it is something that one does when one has broken the law.*
>
> *Davis, 2001*

Following are two aspects of the way the judicial system has utilized community service that have contributed to the negative reactions that people often have.

*1. It is viewed as a punishment.*

The term "community service" is often associated with the judicial system and is seen as a mandated form of punishment for criminal or delinquent behavior (Perkins and Miller, [2000?]). This concept is exemplified by a term used in a national study of community service in the judicial system where, within the study itself, community service is referred to as "community punishment" (Rex, Gelsthorpe, Roberts and Jordan, 2004).

*People have certain perpectives, points of view, or "frames," which exert a powerful influence on their perception of events....Understanding the overall concept of framing...will enable [us] to increase the extent and nature of the learning students take from their...experiences.*

*Allen, 2002*

*2. It is not viewed as being beneficial.*

Within the context of the judicial system, community service typically does not include a learning component designed to promote awareness or improve skills. Offenders often fulfill the required number of hours of raking leaves or picking up trash and the project is over. Without training and reflection, there is no learning or skill enhancement. Without learning or skill enhancement, there is no benefit—confirming the perspective that community service is just a punishment.

Fortunately, this could be beginning to change. A recent study was conducted to compare the effectiveness of using three new approaches to community service in the judicial system, one of which included skill-building and pro-social modeling components (Rex, Gelsthorpe, Roberts, and Jordan, with Moore, Howes, Osada, Powell, Webb, and Merrington, 2004). The preliminary findings of the study validate the importance of including a learning component in the community experience. Offenders who participated in the approach that included skill-building and pro-social modeling expressed "positive views about the opportunity to improve skills or learn new skills both practical/vocational and interpersonal" (Rex et al., 2004).

The way we present the concept of community service is critical to how it is perceived. Following are some strategies that can help frame your community service program so students are more likely to view it as an opportunity to learn and make positive changes:

- Present community service as an opportunity to gain valuable training and skills that will benefit students, not as a form of punishment. Then, deliver on the promise by incorporating strong training, reflection, and skill-building components into the program that will promote learning.

- Encourage service among all students in the school and help them understand the ways in which they can personally gain valuable leadership and employability skills. Educate them on the importance and value of civic involvement and service to our schools, our communities, and to our country as a democracy. Ultimately it is the foundation upon which our democracy rests.

  *The rights and responsibilities of each person to reach out and contribute to the benefit of another individual or the community are often ignored.*

  *Davis, 2001*

- Implement service learning as part of all students' educational experience. Making service learning a part of all students' education can be one of the most effective means of dispelling the image of "community service" being a punishment that the "bad kids" get when they misbehave.

- Use an alternative title for your program such as "civic engagement" or "youth service." This is a very simple adaptation to make; however, in and of itself, it is not a solution. If the community service program is implemented in any way that feels "punishing" in spirit to students or does not include opportunities to learn and find relevance, it won't matter what its title is. It will still carry the stigma of being a punishment. Using an alternative name will be most effective when used in conjunction with all the above suggestions.

*Teens alientated from the mainstream....are interested in joining groups that work toward social change. They simply want to be actively involved in making life better.*

*Mendel, 2004 citing Wheeler*

## Implementing Community Service for Suspended and Expelled Students

There is no single way to organize the infrastructure and program management of a community service program for suspended and expelled students. For example, the responsibility for housing and coordinating the program can be handled effectively by a community organization, by the school, or by a shared effort. Based upon their unique circumstances, each school-community will have to determine the best way to structure the program management and deliver services. Whatever configuration is utilized, the key is to make sure there are adequate levels of communication and collaboration.

*Figure 4* provides an overview of the major components of a community service program that is specifically designed to intervene with suspended and expelled students who have engaged in behaviors that place them at risk for school failure. The components function in a sequence, and when they are all in place, the resulting experience serves as an effective intervention process that can break the cycle of escalating misbehavior and exclusion from school. The principles and recommendations of the Five Critical Elements of a Well-Designed Program described above are incorporated into the implementation

steps below. (See Figures 6 and 7 for an overview of the components and a flow chart of services.)

### *1. Develop Community Partnerships*

The primary goal of developing community partnerships is be able to offer students a variety of options for community service placements—placements that are stacked for success because adequate time was taken to clarify the working relationship and build a strong connection between the school and the partner.

- Get community input: gather information about partners' interests, goals, needs, capacities, and resources.
- Create a formal partnership that clearly defines everyone's roles and responsibilities and a timeframe. (*Note*: While the length of time a student is participating in community service can vary, maximum benefits at a placement will be obtained in a 3-6 month period, at which time a new placement can be made if necessary (Taylor, 2004).
- Provide orientation and training that will prepare community partners to work effectively with students.

### *2. Conduct a School-Based Assessment*

The primary goal of the school-based assessment is to determine whether or not a student is appropriate for a community service placement, and if so, to initiate the process for placement.

- Gather information from the student, parents, and key school staff to determine if the student has the necessary motivation and behavioral control to be successful in and benefit from a community service placement. While community service is not appropriate for all students (e.g., potentially violent students), keep in mind that even very challenging students can have a successful experience if the placement is well-matched and the student has a mentor.
- Communicate/meet with parents.

*The training must educate the [students] about the issues to be addressed… and help them develop the strategies and skills they will need to do the job.*

*Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

### *3. Conduct Student Pre-Placement Services (Assessments, Training, Agreements)*

The primary goal of the pre-placement services is to ensure a positive match between the student and community site and a successful service experience.

- Get student input: gather information about students' interests, goals, needs, and capacities. Instruments/surveys that assess career aptitudes are useful, in addition to input from the student, teachers, and parents regarding the student's strengths and challenges.

Gather any relevant information that might help ensure a good match with a community service site.

- Develop a plan for ongoing academic support during the suspension or expulsion.
- If there is a mentoring component, identify a good match and provide the mentor with orientation and training so they can support the student.
- Provide orientation and training to the student that will prepare them to be successful in their placement.
- Communicate/meet with parents.
- Complete agreements and sign contracts.

***4. Implement Mentoring***

The primary goal of mentoring is to provide the student with a connection to a caring adult who can be a source of support in a number of ways—the mentor can serve as a role model, confidant, guide, friend with whom to engage in social activities, or tutor to provide academic support. It has also been learned that mentoring can enhance the positive impact of community service (LoSciuto et al., 1996). The parameters and purpose of the mentoring role may vary depending upon the program goals and design. (*Note*: Critical considerations regarding mentoring programs, especially when used in conjunction with community service, will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.)

- Identify the best type of mentoring format (ideally group mentoring or one-to-one long term mentoring that lasts a minimum of eight months).
- Provide both the student and the mentor/s with an orientation regarding the goals, timeframe, roles, and responsibilities of the mentoring relationships.

*Evaluation gives direction for improvement, growth and change of future service efforts.*

*COOL, 1999*

***5. Conduct Student Post-Placement Services (Assessments, Follow-Up Support, Agreements)***

The primary goal of post-placement services is to assess the overall impact of the community service experience and identify the student's needs for a successful reintegration into school. It includes developing a plan that identifies both in-school and out-of-school support services.

- Conduct a guided reflection in the following areas to identify successes and goals, and determine needs for follow-up:
  - Community service experience
  - Learning styles (*Note*: A number of surveys and online assessments are available.)

- Goal setting (behavioral, career, and academic goals)

- Develop an action plan for follow-up support/student assistance based upon identified behavioral, career, and academic goals and needs.
- Communicate/meet with parents.
- Complete agreements and sign contracts.
- Recognize and celebrate successes.

***6. Implement School Reintegration Services***

The primary goal of school reintegration services is implement the plan for follow-up support—in other words, "connect the dots" to create a circle of support for them to meet their academic and interpersonal needs upon returning to school.

- Implement the plan for follow-up support/student assistance.
- Conduct a transformative conference or peer mediation if all parties feel it would be beneficial in repairing relationships damaged by the misbehavior.
- Continue mentoring after the student returns to school unless the mentoring relationship is stipulated in advance to last only for the duration of the community service activity, in which case care must be taken to ensure that all parties anticipate and prepare for its termination at the conclusion of the service activity (Rhodes, 2002). Based upon the research findings, *one-to-one mentoring relationships should continue for a minimum of eight months* (Taylor, 2004).

*[Service to the community] presents "real world" opportunities to confront problems, consider alternatives and find solutions.*

*Perkins and Miller, [2000?] citing Schine, 1989*

*Figure 5* is a chart that provides an overview of the flow of services provided in the school and community domains as students proceed through the community service experience. While each of the two domains serves as the "primary" sphere of influence for a period of time, it is important to keep the concept of "simultaneous interaction" in mind: the family domain plays an important role at every stage. *Actively seek parental input and involvement*. When there is communication and collaboration across all three spheres throughout the process, the community service intervention is likely to have the greatest positive impact upon suspended and expelled students.

## Summary

The potential benefits of a well-designed community service program are many. Longitudinal data collected from 22,236 college students who participated in a study comparing community service to service learning determined that *both* types of service participation had a positive impact.

> *Service participation shows significant positive effects on all 11 outcome measures: academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self efficacy, leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college. These findings directly replicate a number of recent studies using different samples and methodologies.*
>
> *Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee, 2000*

The study notes that both types of service groups included reflection activities and concluded that it was an integral component to learning. For the group that participated in service learning, the reflection activities were identified as being a powerful "means of connecting the service experience to the academic course material." The direct link to academic content may explain the fact that service learning demonstrated a stronger impact on academic achievement.

> *Performing service as part of a course (service learning) adds significantly to the benefits associated with community service for all outcomes except interpersonal skills, self-efficacy and leadership.… Benefits associated with course-based service were strongest for the academic outcomes, especially writing skills.*
>
> *Astin et al., 2000*

This study suggests that while suspended and expelled students participating in community service are likely to show some increase in academic achievement, their main gains will be in the area of interpersonal skills, self-efficacy, and leadership. These are skill areas that can lay the groundwork for a successful return to school. However, since service learning has been demonstrated to be so effective in boosting academic achievement, the findings of the study make a strong case for its implementation in school, not only for the benefit of all students, but as a strategy to help students returning from a suspension or expulsion to take their academic gains to the next level.

The causes and circumstances related to suspension and expulsion are many and complex. Consequently, the approach taken to intervene and prevent its reoccurrence must include multiple strategies that continue over an extended period of time. Weick's concept of working for "small wins" seems applicable to effective interventions with suspended and expelled students. He states that complex and seemingly "intractable" problems are best addressed by seeking "small successes in pursuit of larger, more complicated ones" (Nichols and Good, 2004 citing Weick, 1984). A well-designed community service program can provide numerous opportunities for suspended and expelled students to experience small wins—a series of small successes that can add up to a big change in their feelings of self-esteem, competency, and *hope* for a better future.

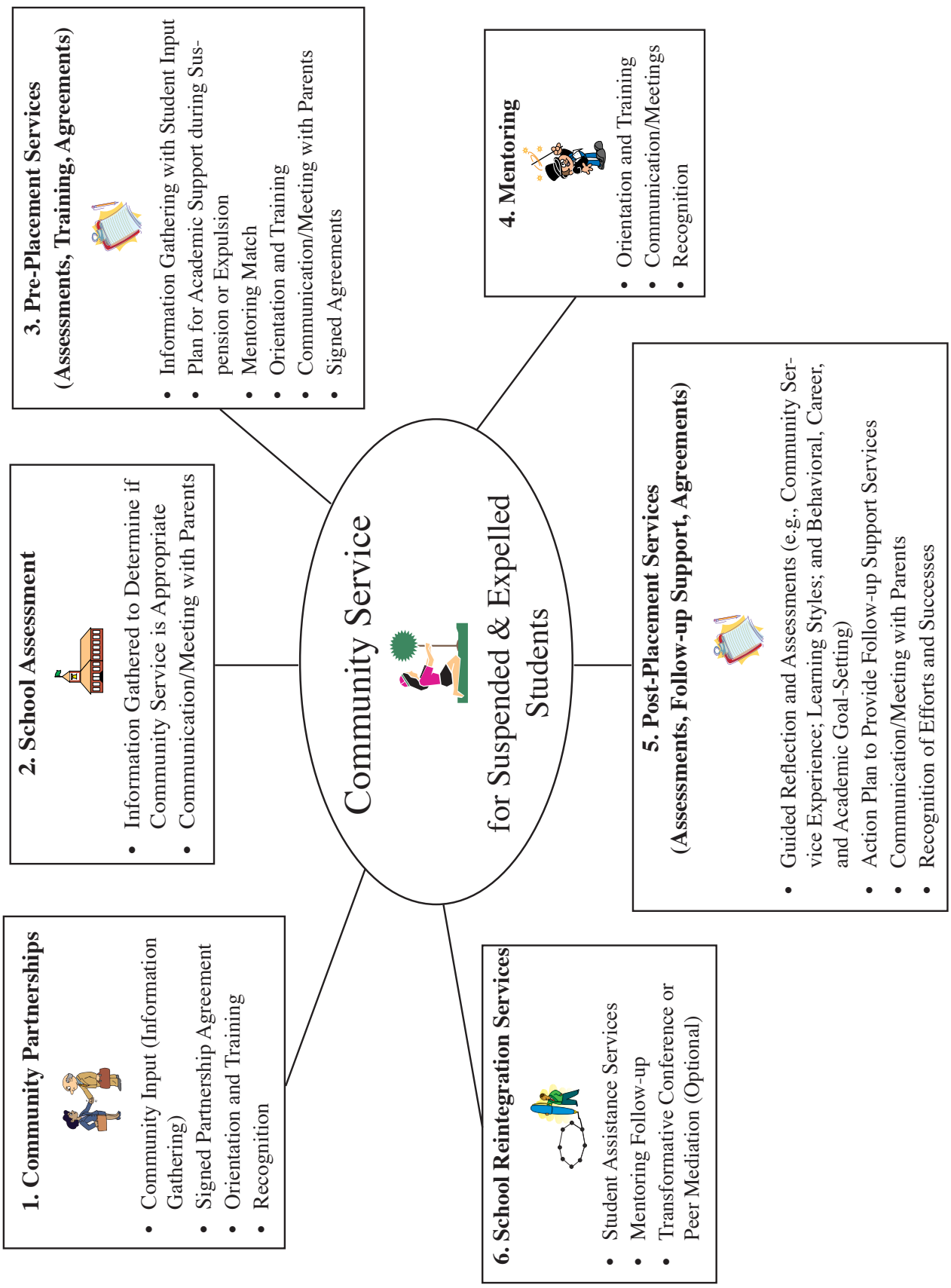



**Figure 6: Overview of Major Components of Community Service Program**

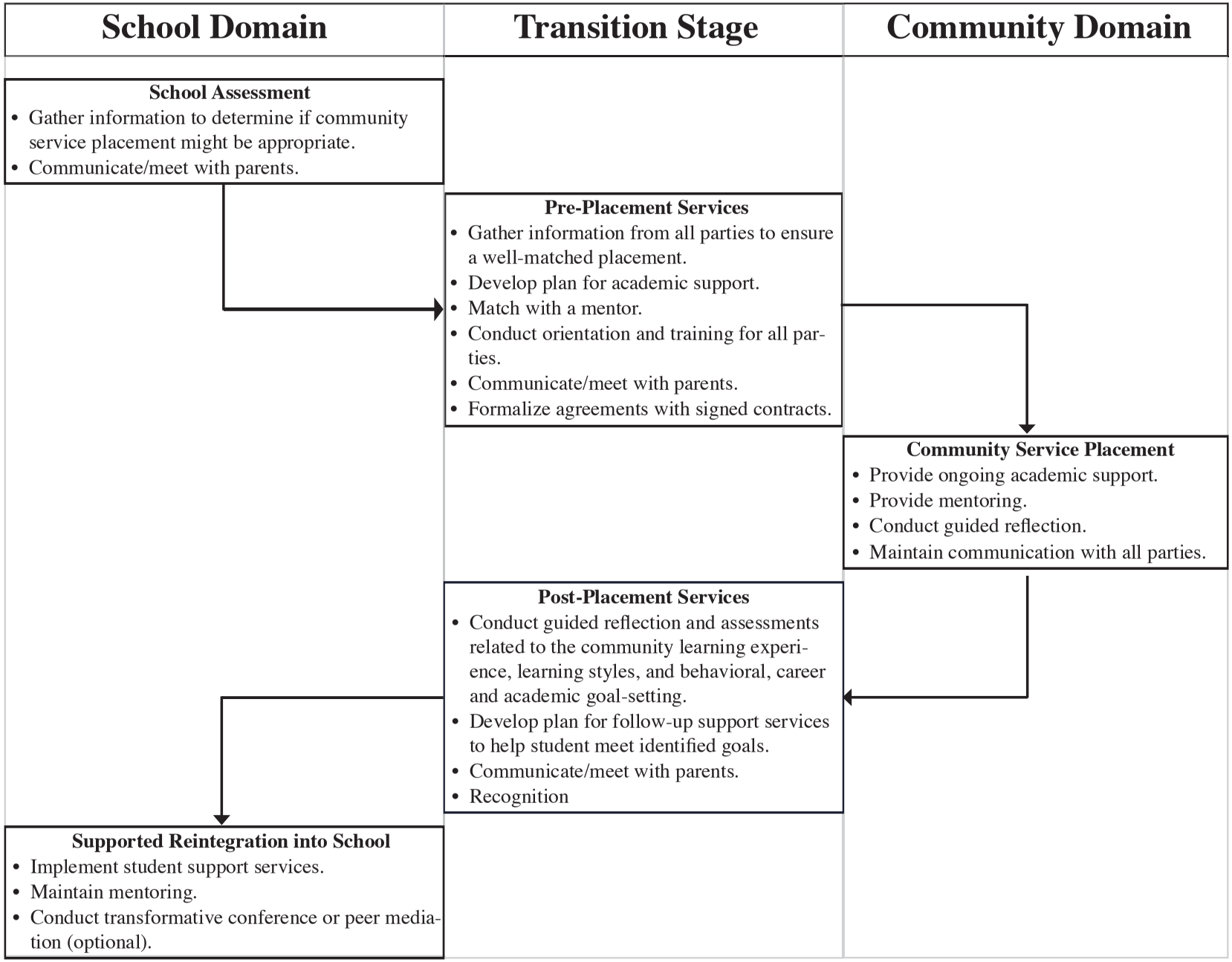



**Figure 7: Domain Flow Chart for Suspended or Expelled Students Participating in Community Service**

## Additional Resources:

1. Taylor, Andrea S., and Jeanette Bressler. *Mentoring Across Generations: Partnerships for Positive Youth Development*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000.

   This book provides excellent research-based suggestions regarding program development that include community service, life skills curriculum, and mentoring. It addresses developing infrastructure, training, and evaluation.

2. University of Maryland. "Community Service Programs: Preparation, Action, Reflection, Evaluation." Office of Community Service Learning, 2001.

   This document provides some very practical suggestions for setting up a community service program, including great ideas for guided reflection activities. It is available online: <http://www.cacs.umd.edu/csp/handouts/qualityservice/pare2001.html>.

3. *Learning Styles Inventories*

   There are numerous assessment tools available to help students identify their preferred learning style, understand its strengths and limitations, and learn how to utilize the information to increase learning. Below are two of many web-based assessments that can be scored on line.

   DVC Learning Styles Inventory: <http://www.metamath.com/lsweb/dvclearn.htm>.

   NC State University Learning Styles Scales: < http://www.ncsu.edu/fyc/current/curriculum/worksheets/l_style_inventory.pdf>.

4. *The Teenager's Guide to the Real World Online: 20 Ways for Teenagers to Help Other People by Volunteering*. <http://www.bygpub.com/books/tg2rw/volunteer.htm>.

   This is a chapter from an online source for the book *The Teenager's Guide to the Real World* by Marshall Brain (ISBN 1-9657430-3-9). This is a great book written for teens. There is a lot of information that could be helpful to suspended and expelled students, such as "Your Job Skills as a Teenager" and "You Get to Design Your Life." The following web site will enable you to download chapters from the book: <http://www.bygpub.com/books/ tg2rw/ tg2rwbooktoc.htm>.

5. Moore, Christian. *The Why Try Program*. Orem, UT: WhyTry, 2001. <www.whytry.org>.

   Designed as a drop out prevention program, this outstanding curriculum addresses many issues confronted by suspended and expelled students, including redirecting anger into positive motivation, defense mechanisms, overcoming obstacles, and utilizing support systems. The ten lessons are highly engaging and interactive.

# Community Domain: Mentoring

**Key Question*: How can mentoring benefit suspended and expelled students?***

## What Is Mentoring?

> *Mentoring is a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee.*
>
> *MENTOR, 2003*

Gregory Clinton provides an additional perspective to the definition of mentoring that is particularly relevant to mentoring high-risk youth (Clinton, 2002). He states that a mentoring relationship "is formed to support the younger person through some aspect of development over a period of time" (2002). This perspective speaks to the value of mentoring as a source of support during a suspension or expulsion—a time of potential developmental changes and growth. Depending upon the design and goals of the program, mentors can provide support to youth by engaging in a variety of roles (Rogers and Taylor, 1997):

*What [mentoring] offers besides a transformational experience to the young people involved, is the opportunity to reconnect the young and old, to reweave the intergenerational threads that are essential to a healthy society.*

*Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light, 2000*

- Companion (interacting with youth and participating in social activities)
- Social Supporter (listening, showing concern, respect and encouragement)
- Teacher (teaching or expanding the youth's horizons)
- Role Model (modeling values and behavior)
- Challenger (encouraging planning and achievement of goals)
- Resource Supporter (providing explanations, perspectives and resources)

There are a number of different forms of mentoring. The National Mentoring Partnership recognizes the following:

1. *Traditional Mentoring*: One adult mentors one youth
2. *Group Mentoring*: One adult mentors up to four youth
3. *Team Mentoring*: Several adults mentor small groups of youth, with the adult to youth ratio not greater than one-to-four
4. *Peer Mentoring*: One youth mentors another youth
5. *E-mentoring*: Mentoring via e-mail or the Internet

While most of the information provided in this section has relevance to all five types, for the purposes of developing a mentoring program that will function in conjunction with community service, the major emphasis in this section will be on traditional mentoring.

## Why Mentoring for Suspended and Expelled Students?

> *It's become increasingly difficult for young people in market societies to have much sustained contact with adults who care about them. I think it's occurring in every sphere of life.*
>
> *Freedman, 1998*

There has been a 164-hour increase in the average number of hours Americans work. In other words, parents are working an extra month each year—translating into less time they have to spend with their children. In schools, student-counselor ratios are often over 600:1 and teachers may see as many as 200 students in a school day—meaning that educators have little time to personally connect with students as individuals. Communities, too, have "become impersonal places" where "three out of four Americans don't know the person living next door"—reducing the number of informal contacts children have with adults outside the family (Freedman, 1998).

*Many young people feel a desparte sense of isolation. Surrounded only by their equally confused peers, too many make poor decisions with harmful or lethal consequences (1989).*

*Sipe, 1996 citing Carnegie Council, 1989*

Not only has there been a decrease in the *amount* of time that youth have contact with adults; the *quality* of the time that *is* spent is often not the most beneficial in terms of promoting positive youth development. A study of 90,000 teenagers conducted by the University of Minnesota revealed that an "enormous amount" of parental time and energy is invested in enforcing "rules and regulations" with their children (Freedman, 1998). The situation is similar in school; educators spend a lot of time enforcing school rules and regulations—frequently with the same students. Freedman states that "investing [an] enormous amount of energy in rules and regulations [is] not where the action is. The action is in adults connecting with kids" (1998). Upholding clear limits and consequences is a protective factor and it is essential for families, schools, and communities to do so. But time spent establishing clear behavioral boundaries needs to be balanced by adequate time for youth to have informal contact and positive attention from adults.

> *Shifting marital patterns, overcrowded schools, and loss of community cohesiveness have dramatically reduced the availability of caring adults and restricted their opportunities for informal contact with youth.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

It is alarming that outside of their family, the majority of youth have no significant adult in their life with whom they have a close relationship (Rhodes, 2002). The lack of adequate time and positive attention from adults causes youth to feel a "sense of alienation toward the rest of society….For youth who grow up with risk factors such as poverty, violence in the home, substance

abuse in the family, and other hardships, this alienation may be magnified…" (Clinton, 2002). Suspended and expelled students frequently have grown up with a variety of risk factors and as previously noted, they do, indeed, feel alienated and disconnected from society.

There is a growing body of carefully conducted research that indicates that mentoring programs can provide vulnerable youth with the adult time and meaningful connections that have been missing in their lives. All youth can benefit from the "support" of "nonparent adults" as they grow up (Benson, 1997); however, for high-risk youth, a relationship with a caring adult can be the determining factor that will change the direction of their lives (Benard, 1997). When students find themselves suspended or expelled, they are at a critical juncture in their lives—depending upon choices they make during that time, their behavior and prospects for success are likely to improve or further deteriorate. Having a connection to a caring adult who believes in them and is an ongoing source of hope and support can help them make the right choices to get their lives on track. We all need someone who will "hang in there" with us when times are hard.

*Through interaction with others, particularly supportive adults, youth acquire the skills necessary for successfully negotiating the world at large.*

*Sipe, 1996*

> *With all the kids I know who make it, there's one thing in common: an individual contact with an adult who cared and who kept hanging in with the teen through his hardest moments…*
>
> *Benard, 1997 citing Staggers, 1994*

Until recently, many of the studies conducted on mentoring lacked scientific rigor. Few included the "comparison groups, statistical controls, or follow-up evaluations" that are needed in order to accurately interpret data and identify essential elements of mentoring (Rhodes, 2002). As a result, many programs were not as effective as they could be, and some were even detrimental to the youth being served. We now know what the critical elements are that help ensure meaningful connections. This chapter presents the findings of a number of well-executed scientific studies, including the evaluation of the Big Brothers/ Big Sisters of America along with twenty-six other programs conducted by Public/Private Ventures, the evaluation of Across Ages conducted by the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, a meta-analysis conducted by Child Trends, and a meta-analysis conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri at Columbus.

The Big Brothers/Big Sisters study included 1,138 youth, ages 10-16. An eighteen-month follow-up revealed that when compared to youth in the control group who did not receive mentoring, the mentored youth had the following outcomes that were consistent across race (Rhodes, 2002):

- fewer academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and relationship problems,
- fewer days of class skipped,
- lower levels of substance use,

- less physical aggression,
- more positive parent and peer relationships, and
- higher scholastic competence and grades.

It should be noted that both the mentored group and the control group showed increases in problem behavior over time; however, the mentored group showed a *significantly slower rate of increase*. It is not unusual to see summaries of this study that fail to qualify the findings by informing the reader that "these differences were in comparison to a control group and not in comparison with their own behavior at the beginning of the program" (Rhodes, 2002).

> *Even when accurately qualified, however, these findings are promising. Problem behaviors, relationship instability, and feelings of inadequacy are hallmarks of adolescence that tend to increase over time among teenagers. The fact that a mentoring program was able to attenuate some of these destructive but developmentally normal behaviors…gives grounds for cautious optimism about the viability of the mentoring approach.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

Across Ages is a multi-dimensional intergenerational program that demonstrated similar findings. It is comprised of four major components: 1) mentoring, 2) community service, 3) life skills development, and 4) parental/family involvement. In a three-year evaluation, the group that received mentoring plus the other three components showed greater gains than the control group or the group that participated in all the components except mentoring. It indicates that a well-developed mentoring program can enhance the positive impact of community service, especially when used with life skills and parent components. The mentored group demonstrated the following outcomes (LoSciuto et al., 1996):

- decreased absences from school,
- decreased substance abuse,
- better attitudes toward school and their future,
- better attitudes toward elders,
- better grades (Taylor, 2004),
- fewer pregnancies (Taylor, 2004), and
- less likelihood to engage in problem behavior in school, including fewer fights, fewer suspensions, and better classroom behavior (Andrea Taylor, phone conversation August 22, 2004).

Child Trends conducted a review of fifteen well-designed, rigorous evaluations to determine the impact of mentoring programs on high-risk youth. While two of the evaluations reviewed were purely mentoring programs, the remaining

thirteen included mentoring as part of a more comprehensive strategy that included things such as community service, life skills curriculum, academic support, or parent workshops. The findings of this meta-analysis validate the overall value of mentoring as a negative behaviors, and promote positive social attitudes and relationships (Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa, 2002). Both when used alone and as part of a comprehensive program, mentoring can be beneficial—especially to high-risk youth.

A meta-analysis of 55 evaluations of mentoring effects on youth conducted by researchers at the University of Missouri at Columbus provides supportive data regarding the potential effectiveness of mentoring along with several important cautions (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper, 2002). An important caution was expressed regarding youth who are already demonstrating "significant dysfunction." The "primarily volunteer and non-professional status of most mentors" may not be adequate to provide them with the level of expertise they require. Depending upon the individual circumstances, these students may need to be placed with a mentor who has a professional background or specialized training in working with high-risk youth, or a referral may need to be made for professional assistance.

> *The most important policy implication that emerges from our review of rigorous experimental evaluations of mentoring programs is that these programs appear to be worth the investment. The finding that highly disadvantaged youth may benefit the most from mentoring programs reinforces this point.*
>
> *Jekielek et al., 2002*

## Critical Elements of Effective Mentoring Programs

> *Make a habit of two things—to help, or at least to do no harm.*
>
> *Hippocrates*

Just because something is called a "mentoring" program does not guarantee it will produce positive outcomes. It does not even guarantee that a student won't be harmed by the mentoring relationship. Relationships can break down for a number of reasons, resulting in few positive gains for the student. Furthermore, programs that do not design and support mentoring relationships for a minimum of eight-to-twelve months actually place the student at risk of inadvertent harm.

> *…mentoring…[is] a connection in which the risks and improvements to youth are proportional to the length and consistency of the bond.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

A well-designed program will minimize the risks and increase the potential for a positive impact. Recent research has identified two critical elements that

are essential to the well being of the student and the success of the program: 1) effective mentoring relationships, and 2) a well-designed infrastructure (i.e., screening, matching, orientation and training, and support and supervision). Careful implementation of each of these elements will both minimize the risks and maximize the opportunity for positive change.

***Effective Mentoring Relationships***

> *Mentors appear to affect youth through some combination of support and role modeling....I have concluded that mentors can influence their protégé's development in three important ways:*
>
> *- by enhancing social skills and emotional well-being,*
>
> *- by improving cognitive skills through dialogue and listening, and*
>
> *- by serving as a role model and advocate.*
>
> *...It is important to note that none of these beneficial changes can occur until the mentor and protégés establish an emotional bond.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

The quality of the relationship is the heart of mentoring. However, not all mentoring relationships touch hearts. The approach taken by the mentor to develop a relationship will determine whether or not a heart-felt connection is made with the mentee. It will also determine the duration and overall effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. There are two common approaches to mentoring relationships: "prescriptive," and "developmental."

*Prescriptive relationships* tend to be more adult driven. The mentor's intention, though well intended, is one of trying to change or save the youth. The adult begins the relationship with goals and an agenda that do not leave much time or opportunity for student input or socializing (Taylor, 2004).

> *…the prescriptive mentors attempted to transform or reform the youth by setting goals early on and adopting a parental or authoritative role in their interactions with youth. They emphasized behavior change more.*
>
> *Freedman, 1998*

*A mentoring program is only as good as its relationships. In order for an older mentor's relationship with a student to result in positive outcomes, an effective relationship must develop first.*

*Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

Based upon findings of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters research, Freedman states that prescriptive relationships tend to end prematurely: "After nine months, only 30% [of prescriptive mentors] were still meeting regularly compared to 91% of mentors who used a developmental approach" (Freedman, 1998). The consequences of a prescriptive approach to mentoring are that they ultimately have less influence on the youth.

*Developmental relationships* focus more on the youth and on developing an authentic, trusting relationship. The mentee has input and time is spent doing social activities that the youth enjoys (Taylor, 2004).

> *[Mentors with a developmental approach] pay attention—this is very important—to youths' needs for fun. Not only is having fun a key part of the relationship building, but it provides valuable opportunities that are often not otherwise available to the [youth]. They respect the young person's viewpoint. But having fun was the thing we kept coming back to [and] the people who were trying to have fun [were the ones] who made this huge difference.*
>
> *Freedman, 1998*

The value of social activities in a mentoring relationship cannot be over emphasized. Having fun together is part of creating a bond that can open doors to serious conversations. In addition to engaging in mutually enjoyable social activities, the following patterns of interaction were also identified among effective mentors (Rogers and Taylor, 1997; Taylor and Bressler, 2000):

1. They understand the youth's reluctance to trust.
2. They identify the youth's interests and take them seriously.
3. They offer reassurance.
4. They do not force disclosure.
5. They offer help in solving problems on the youth's terms.
6. They attempt to understand and be accepting of the youth's family, social class, and culture, but keep their primary involvement with the youth, not the family.
7. They understand the mentor's goal of giving and of building the relationship.
8. They have patience in allowing trust to develop in the relationships.

*Sustained relationships were those in which the mentor saw him/herself as a friend, not a teacher or preacher.*

*Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light, 2000*

Having patience is a significant characteristic because mentoring relationships that are based upon trust and respect take time to develop. Mentors who take a developmental approach to their relationship understand that there may be periods of "silence and unresponsiveness from the young person"—times when the burden of responsibility to nurture and maintain the relationship will rest solely on them. They know that trusting relationships require a long-term commitment; they are willing to be patient and continue reaching out through periods of testing and resistance that might include missed meetings and unreturned phone calls (Freedman, 1998). It often takes about six months for a relationship to evolve beyond the "familiarization and testing stage" into the "commitment and work stage" (Taylor, 2004). Strong emotional bonds that form over time lay the foundation for the work to begin.

Data from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters study were categorized into groups based upon the duration of the mentoring relationship: less than six months, six to just under twelve months, and twelve months or more. Youth who were in mentoring relationships that terminated within the first three months were

harmed by the relationship in terms of significantly lower feelings of self worth and scholastic competence. Students whose matches lasted more than twelve months reported benefits in feelings of self worth, scholastic competence (including skipping fewer school days and having higher grades), improved relationship with parents, and decreased drug and alcohol use (Rhodes, 2002; Jekielek et al., 2002). There is no data that suggest mentoring relationships that last longer than two years are more beneficial than those lasting twelve to twenty-four months (Taylor, 2004).

> *…two results stand out: shorter-lasting relationships were associated with heightened problems, and the positive effects of longer mentoring relationships increased with time.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

It should be noted that there are some types of mentoring programs that do *not* demonstrate the same vulnerability to negative outcomes associated with short-term relationships, for example, programs that have "tightly stipulated endpoints…that mentors and youth can anticipate from the start." Group mentoring, too, is less likely to result in negative consequences when the program ends, possibly because the relationships tend not to be as intense as those formed in one-to-one mentoring (Rhodes, 2002). While short-term or group mentoring programs will help protect against harm, it is clear that one-to-one relationships lasting longer than twelve months will provide the greatest opportunity for a profound impact on the attitudes and behaviors of youth.

It is possible to use a combination of these mentoring strategies in a program. While some students may do well in group mentoring or a short-term program with a schedule that coincides with their service activities, other students who are at a higher level of risk may benefit from a longer, one-to-one mentoring relationship. Group mentoring can be an especially effective format to use in conjunction with community service (Andrea Taylor, phone conversation August 22, 2004). An evaluation conducted on an intergenerational program that offered combinations of one-on-one and group mentoring formats in conjunction with a work placement indicates a greater impact when group mentoring is used: "…one-on-one services should not be offered exclusively, but should be combined with group intergenerational activities" (Brabazon, 1999). Determining the best type of mentoring format for a particular student can be done as part of the pre-placement assessment.

*The development of a caring, trusting, respectful, reciprocal relationship is the key to reducing risks, enhancing protection, and promoting positive youth development in any system.*

*Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light, 2000*

One additional point regarding the duration of the mentoring relationship warrants mention: premature terminations. Perhaps, more than anything else, a premature termination in a one-to-one mentoring relationship holds the greatest risk for youth because they tend to personalize the failure of the relationship. While all youth have some vulnerability to early termination, youth who have a history of unsuccessful or inconsistent relationships may be at greatest risk for harm. In that case, an early termination is just one more failed connection with an adult and another reason not to trust. The resulting feelings of rejection can

lead to "… a host of negative emotional behavioral, and academic outcomes" (Rhodes, 2002 citing Downey and Feldman, 1996).

> *…because a personal relationship is at the heart of mentoring, inconsistencies and terminations can touch on vulnerabilities in youth in ways that other less personal youth programs do not….When adolescents sense that their mentoring relationships are not going well—however minimal or ambiguous the signs—they may readily perceive intentional rejection.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002 citing Downey and Feldman, 1996; Bembry and Ericson, 1999*

*The best way to ensure that a relationship will run its natural course is to carefully screen, train, and support both the adolescent and the mentor in the relationship.*

*Rhodes, 2002*

According to some estimates, "half of all volunteer relationships dissolve within only a few months" (Rhodes, 2002). Rhodes notes that this can happen for many reasons—some of which are outside the control of the mentor, such as the mentee quitting because of competing activities, relationships, or responsibilities; changes in their family status; or the family feeling threatened by the mentor relationship. Reasons why the mentor might terminate the relationship prematurely could include competing family or professional responsibilities; feelings of inadequacy or not being appreciated; or unrealistic expectations regarding student transformation. There is no guarantee that every match will be perfect and will endure for its prescribed length of time. However, it is important to be aware of the potential harm that can come from premature termination and provide adequate program supports to avoid their occurrence and minimize the negative impact when they are unavoidable.

***Well-Designed Infrastructure***

Historically, natural mentoring relationships have formed of their own accord. They often develop as a result of a young person seeking the guidance of a nonparent adult to "help them pass through a stage of development or move through a new body of learning" (Flaxman, Ascher, and Harrington, 1988). The mentoring relationship involves a mutual selection process based upon some combination of shared interests or needs, and it evolves through a natural progression of developmental stages toward closure and termination.

The question is, "How can such a relationship be fostered between two strangers?" The answer is to develop a program infrastructure that promotes and supports sustained developmental relationships that are mutually rewarding.

> *One of the strongest conclusions we have reached from our research is the importance of providing mentors with support in their efforts to build trust and develop positive relationships with youth….Programs need to provide some infrastructure that fosters and supports the development of effective relationships.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

The components of a well-designed infrastructure described below will promote the development of effective mentoring relationships and help sustain them for the duration of the stipulated time frame. They include screening, orientation and training, matching, support and supervision.

> *…three areas are vitally important to the success of any mentoring program: screening, orientation and training, and support and supervision….Matching [is a fourth area, and is] the least critical element.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

*1. Screening*

A thorough screening is a multi-step process that includes the following (Taylor and Bressler, 2000):

a) *Mentor Application*: A written application provides information regarding the candidate's level of education, interests, hobbies, skills, other time commitments, health issues that might interfere with mobility or regular meetings, and any personal or professional experience that might qualify them to work with youth.

*Both parties must realize that building trust, identifying areas of mutual interest, and the process of developing competencies require an extended time commitment.*

*Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light, 2000*

b) *Intake Interview*: An interview allows program staff to follow up on any questions related to the application and learn more about the applicant's "flexibility, problem-solving, and listening skills" (Taylor and Bressler, 2000). It is also important to review an applicant's current life commitments. This includes making sure they know what the expected time commitment is for mentoring and discussing how it would fit in with their personal and professional responsibilities. A minimum of two-to-six hours per week is usually recommended (Rogers and Taylor, 1997).

However, consistency of contact is much more important than quantity of contact, especially in the formative stages of the relationship (Taylor, 2004). It is important that mentors understand the need for regular meetings and the potential harm that results from inconsistency and early termination. If it is apparent that the time commitment required for mentoring would be too big for their schedule, other roles in the program that require less time can be considered.

> *Individuals whose other commitments indicate they will have difficulty meeting with a youth on a consistent basis should be screened out.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

Much can be learned about the candidate's motivation and approach to mentoring by presenting them with scenarios during the interview and asking them to describe how they might respond. If it is apparent that the applicant is strongly rooted in a prescriptive style where their motivation to be a mentor is to save or transform a youth, they can be

redirected to youth programs that are not so dependent upon the quality of the relationship, e.g., programs that are more activity or goal focused (Sipe, 1996).

*Individuals who understand the importance of building trust and being a friend to the youth…are most likely to experience success in the relationship [and consequently, as an effective mentor].*

*Sipe, 1996*

c) *Reference Checks*: It is important to contact at least three non-family references regarding things like reliability, ability to get along with others, and their general lifestyle.

d) *Criminal Background Check*: In order to ensure the youth will be safe, it is critical to make sure the applicant does not have a record of criminal history or child abuse.

e) *Successful Completion of a Mentor Preservice Training*: Across Ages conducts two days (10 hours) of preservice training as the final step of the screening. (The content of the preservice training is described below.) The preservice is an excellent opportunity for the candidate to get a more in depth understanding of what mentoring entails and decide if they want to proceed, and for the program staff to get a better sense if the applicant is likely to be an effective mentor. It is the final stage of screening for both.

*Mentors need to know how to interpret and cope with common frustrating experiences, such as reluctance to talk, missed appointments, unanswered phone calls, and exaggerated demands (Morrow and Styles, 1995). Listening and communicatin skills are essential.*
*Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

*….do not exclude mentor preservice training as part of the screening process. Mentors who successfully complete the [preservice] training are those who (1) have not missed any sessions, and (2) understand the mission, demonstrate the skills, and embody the values and spirit of the project.*

*Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

*2. Orientation and Training*

The goal of a mentoring program is to connect the lives of two strangers in hopes they will develop an emotional bond that is mutually rewarding and beneficial. It is unrealistic to think this is going to happen simply because a match has been made on paper. Orientation and training prepare the mentor and mentee by giving them information and skills that can help their relationship get off to a good start. And yet, many programs provide little or no orientation or training.

*Among 700 nationally representative mentoring programs, fewer than half provided volunteers with two or more hours of training, and a distressing 22 percent offered no training whatsoever.*

*Rhodes, 2002 citing Sipe and Roder, 1999*

Across Ages provides training in two segments: 1) preservice training (ten hours over two days) conducted prior to final acceptance of a candidate as a mentor, and 2) monthly in-service workshops (two hours each) conducted to support the mentoring relationship once it has begun.

> *Many adults who volunteer for mentoring programs have relatively little idea of where youth are developmentally or how to best interact with them….Perhaps one of the most important lessons training should attempt to teach are that building a relationship cannot be rushed and that any attempt to change behavior will not be very effective until a solid relationship has been established.*
>
> *Taylor and Bressler, 2000*

The components of the two-day preservice training described below are taken from a mentors training manual developed by the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University (Henkin, Pérez-Randal, Rogers, and Taylor, 1993):

- mentor job description and guidelines,
- mentor roles,
- program procedures and policies,
- understanding today's youth (e.g., adolescent development, issues confronting youth, danger signs and referral process), and
- building the mentor-youth relationship (e.g., meeting the mentee, effective mentoring relationships, stages of the relationship, goal-setting, effective communication skills, cultural sensitivity, relating to the youth's family, suggested activities).

The monthly in-service workshops provide an opportunity for mentors to ask questions, get help with specific challenges, continue developing skills, and socialize with other mentors and program staff. Periodically, workshops can include presentations on topics of interest to the mentors, such as "HIV/AIDS, adolescent sexuality, and working with families" (Taylor and Bressler, 2000). The monthly inservice workshops also help program staff get a sense of how mentoring relationships are going, in case they need to intervene in some way to help. The amount of training mentors receive plays a critical role in determining the success of the mentoring relationship.

*The difference in every case...was persistence on the part of the mentors. [This] ended up being the key variable in reaching kids who didn't have the natural ability to just win over adults easily.*

*Henderson, Benard, Sharp-Light, 2000*

> *…those mentors who attended fewer than two hours of pre-match orientation or training reported the lowest levels of satisfaction with their matches, whereas those attending six or more hours of training reported having the strongest relationships.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002 citing Herrera, Sipe, and McClanahan, 2000*

Everyone involved with the project can benefit from some degree of orientation, including parents and other partners if the mentoring is part of a comprehensive

approach that includes other components. An orientation workshop helps ensure that all parties involved understand the purpose and expectations of the program (Taylor and Bressler, 2000).

*3. Matching*

> *…matches that take into account both the youth's and mentor's preferences, in terms of both demographic characteristics and activities they want to participate in, are more likely to result in relationships that are satisfying to both members of the pair.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

Assuming that all of the above elements are in place and operational, making the match between mentor and mentee is the least critical element. In general, characteristics such as race, age, and gender are not determining factors in the longevity, effectiveness, or quality of the relationship (Sipe, 1996).

There has been controversy about cross-race matching, with some people feeling that same-race matches better equip mentors to understand the cultural issues faced by minority youth (Rhodes, 2002). There are a number of studies, however, that indicate "effective relationships were just as likely to form in cross-race pairs as in same-race pairs" (Rhodes, 2002). This is good news because it provides programs with more flexibility in making sure that a youth is able to benefit from a mentoring relationship.

> *…with the exception of youth for whom racial issues are an overriding concern, the mentor's race or ethnicity may not be the critical factor… Some claim that cross-race matching…can actually bridge social distances and challenge negative stereotypes.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

*Serving the needs of mentors is as important as serving the needs of youth...*

*Henderson, Benard, and Sharp-Light, 2000*

Once again, whether talking about race, gender, socio-economic background, or age, the determining factor is the quality of the relationship. Sharing similar interests and activities is far more important, along with the mentor's ability to form a close relationship (Rhodes, 2002).

> *Regardless of other characteristics, mentors who focus their efforts on building trust are more likely to develop an effective relationship with their youth than are those who do not.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

*4. Support and Supervision*

> *When professional staff spend more time contacting volunteers, mentors have better "attendance" and develop better quality matches, compared with programs in which staff have minimal contact with volunteers.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

There undoubtedly will be times when the mentor experiences frustration or confusion as to the best way to handle a situation (e.g., the mentee might not show up for meetings or return phone calls, may be reluctant to talk about anything personal, or they might be engaging in concerning behaviors). Without support, there is a danger the mentor could become discouraged and quit. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, including limited human and financial resources, the level of contact and support after the initial orientation and training tends to diminish (Rhodes, 2002).

> *Providing youth with mentors, without sufficient resources to support those mentors, will most likely not generate a high percentage of long-term, successful relationships.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

It is essential to have a program infrastructure that can support the development and maintenance of effective and sustained relationships. An important aspect of this support is providing structured activities for the mentors and mentees throughout the relationship (DuBois et al., 2002). While especially important in the early stages of the relationship, structured activities that are offered periodically can help promote consistency of contact. Periodic phone contacts and monthly workshops can help keep the line of communication open and provide support at critical junctures of the relationship. The bottom line is that regular supervision and support can make the critical difference in the duration and quality of the mentoring relationship—and on the type of impact it has upon the youth.

> *Access to either professional staff or other mentors…can help volunteers get through the rough spots so that matches have a chance to develop, rather than dissolve prematurely.*
>
> *Sipe, 1996*

**Summary**

> *…Shepherd Zeldin and colleagues reviewed more than 200 research studies and concluded that, in order to successfully pass through adolescence, youth need "access to safe places, challenging experiences, and caring people on a daily basis." Mentoring is often seen as an important avenue for fulfilling these needs.*
>
> *Rhodes, 2002*

A large body of research indicates that mentoring can be an effective strategy to help students navigate the ordinary challenges of adolescence. It also indicates that mentoring is particularly effective as a means to help youth who are living in adverse circumstances and are at high-risk for problem behaviors. This makes mentoring a particularly valuable strategy for schools and communities to use with suspended and expelled students.

Participation in a mentoring relationship, along with community service, can provide students with "access to safe places, challenging experiences, and caring people on a daily basis" during their suspension or expulsion. It can transform a suspension or expulsion into a time of growth and development during which a mentor is "the adult who cared and who kept hanging in with the teen through his hardest moments " (Benard, 1997 citing Staggers, 1994).

> *… interventions for high-risk youth must unite them and the important adults in their lives in a collaborative effort to develop positive coping skills and strategies for staying in school, abstaining from risky sexual behavior and resisting drugs.*
>
> *Rogers and Taylor, 1997*

**Additional Resources**

1) Rhodes, Jean E. *Stand by Me: The Risks and Rewards of Mentoring Today's Youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

   This is one of the most complete and comprehensive books written about mentoring. It provides a clear and readable overview of mentoring theory and practical implications of the research.

2) Taylor, Andrea S., and Jeanette Bressler. *Mentoring Across Generations: Partnerships for Positive Youth Development*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000.

   This is an excellent resource book that provides theory and implementation steps for each of the four major components of Across Ages: 1) community service, 2) mentoring, 3) life skills, and 4) parent/family activities.

3) Henkin, Nancy Z., Cid Pérez-Randal, Anita M. Rogers, and Andrea Taylor. Elders as Mentors: A Training Program for Older Adults (Video and Facilitator's Guide). Temple University: Center for Intergenerational Learning, 1993.

   Although written as a preservice training manual for older mentors, the information is applicable to any age adult mentor. It provides well-organized information and ideas for activities for a two-day preservice mentor training.

4) Public/Private Ventures

   Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to "assess the effectiveness of these promising approaches and distill their critical elements and benchmarks, using rigorous field study and research methods." Public/Private Ventures has a wealth of research-based information available on their web site: <http://www.ppv.org>. Click on "publications / overviews." Some useful documents related to mentoring include the following:

- Mentoring: A Synthesis of P/PV's Research: 1988-1995
- Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors
- Group Mentoring: A Study of Mentoring Groups in Three Programs
- Training New Mentors
- The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring
- Measuring the Quality of Mentor-youth Relationships: A Tool for Mentoring Programs

5) Nurturing the Mentor in You: The Mentor Survey (Peer Resources) <http://www.mentors.ca/test.html>.

   This is a fifteen-item survey that automatically analyzes your responses on line. It can give mentors and program staff some insights and conversation starters. It can be downloaded and taken at no cost.

# B. Effective School Domain Strategies

*The most common characteristic of…safe schools is a strong sense of community. It is also not a coincidence that these schools are also places where students and teachers feel supported, where students are academically engaged, and where trust, respect, and norms of reciprocity are sufficient to promote behavior that is conducive to high levels of involvement and support from the parents and the communities they serve. Safety at these schools is a by-product of supportive social capital, one of few school reforms that actually cost very little.*

*Noguera, 2001*

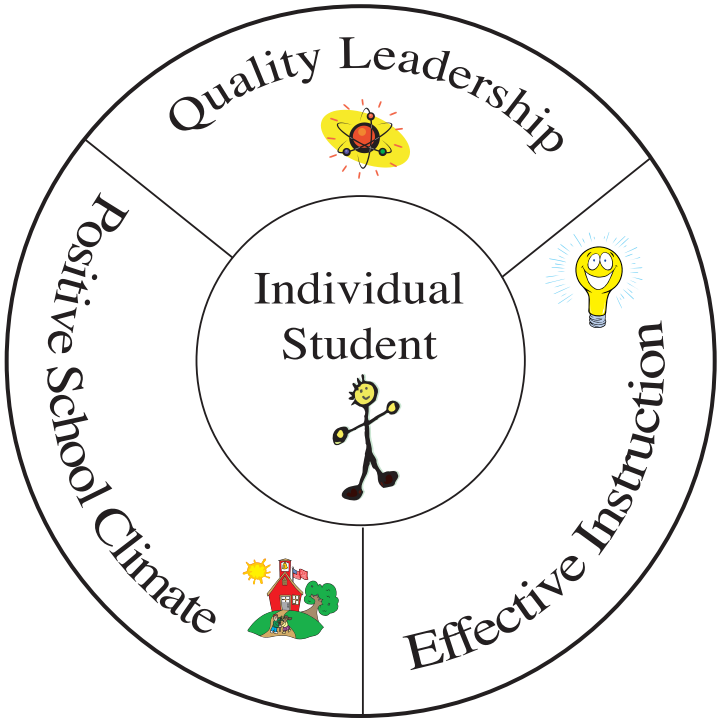



**Figure 8: School Domain Environmental Protective Factors**

There are three components in the Effective School Domain that are based upon the findings of a meta-analysis of research conducted by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2001) to determine, "characteristics which distinguish effective schools...schools in which all students master priority objectives."

1. Quality Leadership
2. Positive School Climate
3. Effective Instruction

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory research article that inspired this categorization ("Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows") is reprinted with permission in Section V: *Resources*. An *Effective Schools Survey* is also included in that same section that schools can use as a self-assessment tool. The hope is that schools can identify their current strengths and needs, and use that information to develop a long-term plan for systemic change that will result in "keeping kids in school" with increased student success, both academically and socially!

*Note:* On the following pages is an overview of the projected research-based strategies that relate to each of the above components that will be described, along with a rationale, in the next installment of the Resource Guide.

## Overview of Strategies for Effective Schools

1. **Quality Leadership**

   *Note:* This section will include descriptions and research regarding effective instructional leadership and organizational systems change.

2. **Positive School Climate**

   **(a) Positive Strength-Based Relationships**
   (e.g., student-student, staff-student, staff-staff, staff-parents, school-community)

   - Asset-Development/Resiliency (underlying philosophy and focus)
   - Mentoring (formal/informal; intergenerational/peer)
   - Social/Coping Skills (conflict resolution/problem-solving skills curriculum)
   - Character Education Curriculum
   - Cultural Competence (for students and staff)
   - Competence in De-Escalation and Non-Verbal Communication
   - Strong Parent Partnerships
   - Strong Community Partnerships

   **(b) Clear Limits and Consequences**

   - Written Behavioral Expectations and Consequences (clearly communicated to all students, staff, and parents)
   - Effective Consequences (fair, incremental, non-punitive, and designed for learning, i.e.,they include structured reflection and remedial skill-building opportunities)
   - Bullying /Harassment Prevention Program
   - Transformative/Restorative Conferencing
   - Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion
   - Structured Support Programs for Suspended (out-of-school) and expelled students (e.g., Community Service)
     (See *Section III: Figure 4: Community Service Mindmap* and *Figure 5: Domain Flow Chart)*

   **(c) Opportunities for Student Leadership and Involvement**

   - Opportunities for Student Input into School Rules and Procedures (meaningful involvement)

- Opportunities for Student Activities and Recognition (including a *variety* of talents and interest areas)

**(d) Student Support Services**

- Student Assistance Program (identification and referral to in-school and community-based services)
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- School-Based Counseling and Support/Skill Groups
- Crisis Response Capacity (written plan and staff trained to Rrespond to critical incidents)

**(e) School Building and Grounds**

- Attractive, Well-Kept School and Grounds
- **S**tudent Participation and Creativity Reflected in Decor

**3. Effective Instruction**

- Use of Neuroscience-Based Strategies (group interaction, multiple teaching modes, graphic organizers/mind maps, projects, experiential activities, layered curriculum, facilitation techniques, etc.)
- Cooperative Learning
- Service Learning

# IV. PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: THE CHANGE PROCESS

**Key Question:** ***How do we motivate and maintain a systems change that will prevent suspensions and expulsions and promote student success for all?***

*...consider the American penchant for ignoring the structural causes of problems. We prefer the simplicity and satisfaction of holding individuals responsible for whatever happens: crime, poverty, school failure, what have you. Thus, even when one high school crisis is followed by another, we concentrate on the particular people involved––their values, their character, their personal failings—rather than asking whether something about the systems in which these students find themselves might also need to be addressed.*

*Kohn, 1999*

*…until recently we have attempted to alter education in a piecemeal fashion.*
*Golarz, 1994*

*The new problem of change, then...is what would it take to make the educational system a learning organization—expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy [reform initiative, education or prevention strategy], but as a way of life.*

*Fullan, 1993*

*Note*: Descriptions of specific strategies for an effective systems change process will be described in the next installment of the Resource Guide!

# V. RESOURCES

**Key Question**: ***What resources are available?***

The following categories of resources will be included in this section upon completion:

A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books

B. Community Service Grant Contact Information:

1. SAPE Technical Support Consultants
2. Michigan Department of Education Project Director
3. Project Evaluator

C. Assessment and Planning Tools

D. Learning Community Meeting Format

## A. Annotated Bibliography of Research Articles and Books

In addtion to those suggested within specific chapters, the following articles and books are recommended reading. A more complete Annotated Bibliography will be added at a later time:

**Articles:**

1) Druian, Greg, and Jocelyn A. Butler. "Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows." *School Improvement Research Series* 2001. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/1/topsyn1.html>.

   This article provides an overview of the three components of the Effective Schools Domain.

2) "Zero Tolerance Policies and Their Impact on Michigan Students: Zero Tolerance Policies in Context." *Spotlight* January 2003. Michigan Public Policy Initiative. <http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/spotlight%202002_12.pdf>.

   This document provides an excellent overview of the zero tolerance policy and its application in Michigan. It includes data related to suspension and expulsion and recommendations for change.

3) "Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities." 2003. Commission on Children at Risk. <http://www.americanvalues.org/html/hardwired.html>.

   An excellent article describing research on the importance of connections.

**Books:**

4) Gallegos, Arnold, ed. *School Expulsions, Suspensions, and Dropouts: Understanding the Issues*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa International, 1998.

   This volume includes a collection of nearly 30 excellent articles related to suspension, expulsion, and drop outs. Examples of topics addressed include: causal structures, impact, cultural disproportion of Native American students, legal issues, dress codes and gang activity,

school uniforms, classroom management, alternative education programs for expelled students, vocational entrepreneurship for youthful offenders, in-school suspension, anger management for students, truancy, and block schedule restructuring.

5) Bluestein, Jane. *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools: A Guide for Educators and Parents*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2001.

   This book provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of a systems approach to creating an educationally sound and safe school environment. It's highly recommended.

6) Olweus, Dan. *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1993.

   Dan Olweus conducted the ground breaking research upon which current state-of-the-art bullying prevention programming is based.

7) Jensen, Eric. *Different Brains, Different Learners: How to Reach the Hard to Reach*. San Diego: The Brain Store, 2000.

   This is a user-friendly book that describes the neuroscience behind a variety of learning and behavioral impairments—along with strategies for educators.

# B. Community Service Grant Contact Information

## 1. SAPE Technical Support Consultants

### CALHOUN ISD (17111 G. Drive N, Marshall, MI 49068)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Guy Golomb | Work phone | 269-781-5141 |
| | Work fax | 269-781-8792 |
| | E-mail | golombg@calhoun-isd.k12.mi.us |

### EATON ISD (1790 E. Packard Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Charlotte Koger | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1161 |
| | Work fax | 517-543-4870 |
| | E-mail | ckoger@eaton.k12.mi.us |
| Sarah Lurie | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1111 |
| | Work fax | 517-543-4870 |
| | E-mail | slurie@eaton.k12.mi.us |
| Polly Brainerd | Work phone | 517-543-5500 ext. 1239 |
| | Work fax | 517-543-4870 |
| | E-mail | pbrainer@eaton.k12.mi.us |
| Martha Neilsen | Home phone | 517-627-4703 |
| | E-mail | neilsenrm@comcast.net |

### KENT ISD (2930 Knapp St. NE Rd., Grand Rapids, MI 49525)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| John Belaski | Work phone | 616-365-2270 |
| | Work fax | 616-364-1489 |
| | E-mail | johnbelaski@kentisd.org |

### MACOMB ISD (44001 Garfield Rd., Clinton Twp., MI 48038-1100)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lucy Smith | Work phone | 586-228-3491 |
| | Work fax | 586-286-2809 |
| | E-mail | lsmith@misd.net |

### MARQUETTE-ALGER RESA (321 East Ohio. St., Marquette, MI 49855)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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## 2. Michigan Department of Education (Project Director)

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## 3. O'Neill Consulting/Madonna University (Project Evaluator)

**MADONNA UNIVERSITY (36600 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150)**

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# C. Assessment and Planning Tools

## Connections Effective Schools Survey

The *Connections Effective Schools Survey* is included as a self-assessment tool designed to help schools identify their strengths and needs in each of the three components of the school domain:

A. Quality Leadership

B. Positive School Climate

C. Effective Instruction

The survey can also be administered on-line.

## Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

The *Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships* is included with permission of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon. It is based upon Epstein's six types of involvement for partnerships and is an excellent planning tool.

# D. Learning Community Meeting Format

The *Learning Community Meeting Format* provides structure and helps a group keep their focus while maintaining a comfortable flexibility.

# E. Selected Journal Articles

1. Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows
2. Hardwired to Connect: The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communtities

**STAFF Version**

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract

***Connections: Keeping Kids in School***

# School Effectiveness Survey - STAFF Version

## Instructions for CSG Project Directors

**What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Staff Version measure?**
This survey consists of 25 items designed to measure perceptions of school climate, leadership and instructional practices among school administrators, teachers, counselors and support staff. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

**Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?**
The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

**What is the deadline for completing this survey?**
MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

**How long does it take to complete the survey?**
The survey should take no more than 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

**Who should complete the survey?**
As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by *all* school administrators, staff, counselors, and support staff from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should survey their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Potterville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have "buy-in" regarding school improvement and are seeking "school profile" data to inform those efforts.

**How many respondents at each site should complete the survey?**
To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, *all* administrators, teachers, counselors, and other support staff at each school should complete the survey.

**How do staff complete the survey?**
Each staff member will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Staff.html. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

**What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?**
The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?**
Contact Jim O'Neill at: joneill@madonna.edu

**Thank You!**

**STUDENT Version**

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Title IV, Part A, Section 4126
Community Service Grant (CSG) Contract

***Connections: Keeping Kids in School***

# School Effectiveness Survey - STUDENT Version

## Instructions for CSG Project Directors

**What does the School Effectiveness Survey-Student Version measure?**
This survey consists of 18 items designed to measure middle and high school students' perceptions of school climate. The instrument was designed by Dee Lindenberger of SAPE (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education); in collaboration with Jim O'Neill, MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project, to provide programmatic needs assessment information for schools involved in the CSG project.

**Is this survey required as part of the CSG contract?**
The survey is not required, but it is offered by MDE to assist as a *programmatic needs assessment* for the next grant cycle application. In addition, consider these advantages of participating in the survey:

- School climate is a central issue in many districts as part of school/district improvement efforts.
- Results from this survey can be used with those of the student version of the same survey to provide "triangulated" feedback about school climate.
- The report will provide valuable needs assessment information which helps target program efforts as well as secure funding and other support from a variety of sources.
- Data analysis and report generation are provided by MDE at no cost to grant recipients.
- Your individualized report will include benchmarks from aggregated results of all other participating CSG recipients. (Note: Your Individual results will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks).
- The same survey will be administered next grant cycle and that report (also provided by MDE) will include year-to-year comparisons.

**What is the deadline for completing this survey?**
MDE will provide survey results to all participating CSG recipients by March 2, 2004. In order to provide sufficient time to analyze the data and generate reports, all surveys must be completed by **Friday, February 13, 2004.**

**How long does it take to complete the survey?**
The survey should take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

**Who should complete the survey?**
As mentioned earlier, this survey is not required as part of your CSG project. If you decide to participate, the survey should be completed by students from schools participating in the CSG project. The following grantees should include students from their CSG school site(s):

- Detroit: Crosman Alternative HS
- Detroit: Trombley Alternative HS
- Flint: Whittier MS
- Hazel Park: Breakfast Club and Advantage
- Lake Orion: Lake Orion HS and Alternative Ed
- Potterville: NEC HS
- South Redford: Thurston HS

For CSG recipients not listed above (e.g., ISDs, large LEAs), there are numerous school sites that could be surveyed. The decision of which schools to include is at the discretion of the CSG recipient. As you decide, consider including schools that have these characteristics:

- The schools vary in some way from each other demographically (e.g., urban vs. rural; high-income vs. low-income; large vs. small schools; high-risk vs. low-risk population)
- The schools have relatively high levels of suspensions and/or expulsions.
- The schools have "buy-in" regarding school improvement and are seeking "school profile" data to inform those efforts.

**How many students at each site should complete the survey?**
To ensure that grantees can be used as reliable benchmarks for each other, all CSG recipients should follow these general guidelines for sampling:

Middle school: Survey grade 6 and 8 only, at least 100 students per grade.
High School: Survey grade 10 and 12 only, at least 100 students per grade.
Alternative School: Survey all students/grades.

The MDE Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project (Jim O'Neill) will be in touch with you sometime during the week of 1/19 to assist with sampling issues, if needed.

**How do students complete the survey?**
Each student will need to use a computer with access to the internet. The survey web site is: http://home.comcast.net/~joneillphd/MDE-CSG-SchoolEffectiveness-Student.html. Once accessed online, the survey includes instructions.

To expedite completion of the survey, it can be administered in groups in a location with multiple computers. If you are concerned about the reading comprehension level of your students, the survey can be read aloud by an adult.

**What happens to the survey results? When will they be available to me?**
The results will be tabulated for and reported separately to each CSG recipient by Jim O'Neill, the Evaluation Consultant for the CSG project. The report will include results for the grantee's participating school(s) as well as aggregated benchmark data from other CSG recipients. Please note that individual results from your site will not be identified in reports sent to other grant recipients – they will be combined with results from others to form aggregate benchmarks.

The results will be available on or before the CSG Workshop on March 2, 2004, which will include a session on how to utilize this report for the grant application for next grant cycle.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns?**
Contact Jim O'Neill at: joneill@madonna.edu

**Thank You!**

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part II
# **Quality Leadership**

*For Teaching, Counseling/Social Work, and Administrative Staff*

**School Name:**_____

**I am:**

_____Administrator
_____Teacher
_____Counselor/Social Worker
_____Other

_____Male
_____Female

**About Quality Leadership**

Schools face challenging educational, economic, and social issues. The more effectively school staff members are able to work together as a cohesive team, the more successful they will be in addressing these issues with creativity and resourcefulness—and in providing an optimal learning environment for their students.

Peter Senge (author of The Fifth Discipline and Schools that Learn) conducted extensive research to identify the key characteristics of high functioning organizations. He discovered that the most successful and resilient organizations were those where staff members were able to work together as *learning teams*. These powerful teams had the capacity to overcome obstacles and thrive, even in times of challenging conditions and economic crisis.

> *And it is more than simply a kind of group togetherness, like a committee. It is a togetherness that is synergistic, honoring the differences we bring to the table—and the chaos as well—one that enhances us both as individuals and as a co-creative team or group.*
>
> *David Spangler*

Senge discovered that learning teams are characterized by five social technologies that he calls "disciplines." Each of the disciplines is described below, followed by questions that can help you assess how well your staff functions as a team.

**Instructions for Completing this Survey**

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for "Not Typical." If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for "Very Typical."

| Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Developed by: Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA
In collaboration with: Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University
SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

**Team Learning:** *Staff members have the capacity to learn with and from each other. They actively debate and share their ideas, and "listen deeply" to each other's opinions. Team learning is characterized by collegial relationships and shared leadership.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The following is true of our interactions as a staff: | | | | | |
| a. Respectful relationships are a priority. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. People really listen to each other's ideas in discussions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Irrespective of roles, we work together as a team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Staff members feel their opinions and ideas are valued—even if they're "out of the box"! | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Staff use effective conflict resolution skills when they have a disagreement with each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Staff members have fun together. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Teachers and administrators share leadership roles and responsibilities in their efforts to make our school the best it can be. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. There is a clear process in place for decision-making that includes opportunities for participation and input (where appropriate) by key stakeholders: | | | | | |
| a. Staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Staff are given adequate time to work together on school initiatives and problem-solving. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. When staff members attend a training or conference, they share what they learned with the rest of the staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Systems Thinking:** *Staff members engage in the practice of stepping back and looking at the "big picture" of a situation, i.e., its complexities and inter-related dynamics. They try to foresee the long-term impact and the potential for "unintended consequences" that might result from a course of action.*

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Our staff utilize "systems thinking" (as described above) when planning new initiatives or addressing problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Our staff are willing to invest in effective long-term solutions rather than quick "fixes" to problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Our staff try to foresee long-term and unintended consequences when planning or solving problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Mental Models:** *Staff members have the ability to recognize and work with people's "mental models" i.e., their underlying paradigms or assumptions about "the way things are or should be." They are willing to suspend their own beliefs and listen to the perspectives of others with an open mind.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. Staff actively seek to understand each other's point of view. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. People feel safe to talk about things, including their feelings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Differences of opinion among our staff generally result in productive problem-solving. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Shared Vision:** *All staff members have a "shared vision" i.e., they share some core beliefs and underlying assumptions regarding teaching and learning that guide their behavior and decision-making. The beliefs are positive and personally meaningful to each staff member.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. How typical of your staff are the following underlying beliefs? (*Note:* Before responding to these questions, think about how passionately people hold these beliefs and how they are manifested in your school. Use the space at the end of the survey to add comments.) | | | | | |
| a. All students are capable of learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Respect and caring for students are exhibited in all interactions—including disciplinary interventions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Safety and trust among students and teachers are essential to the learning process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. It's important that discipline strategies include a "teaching" component to help students learn pro-social behaviors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. We need to utilize a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of students' different learning styles. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Learning can be joyful, interesting, and meaningful! | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. Our school has written policy and procedures that accurately reflect the strategies, services, and programming that are utilized. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Staff feel a strong *moral purpose* in their roles as educators and youth advocates—they have a personal commitment and passion for teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Staff uphold a common set of behavioral expectations for students by consistently intervening when there are infractions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Conversations in the staff lounge are respectful (e.g., no sarcasm, put downs, hurtful gossip, or breaking confidentiality). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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**Personal Mastery:** *All staff members are personally committed to a life-style of inquiry and learning, both personally and professionally.*

---

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17. Ongoing staff development/learning is supported. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Staff members are enthusiastic about teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Staff members actively seek opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Staff contributions and successes are acknowledged and celebrated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

21. Please indicate how many hours of professional development you participated in last year:

_____0 days _____3 - 4 days

_____Less than 1 day _____5 - 6 days

_____1 - 2 days _____More than 6 days (How many?)

In summary, think about how you would describe the overall manner in which your staff members and administration relate and work together as a team.

> *The most powerful indicator of student achievement is the quality of relationships among the staff.*
> *Harvard Principal's Center*

22. Circle the letter of the metaphor that most closely describes the way in which your school staff most often tends to work together on projects and school initiatives:
    a. Carousel: *We go round and round with things.*
    b. Shooting Gallery: *People, rather than problems, get targeted.*
    c. Swamp Thing: *We get pretty bogged down.*
    d. Turtle: *Things move along, but progress is pretty slow.*
    e. Bumper Cars: *Everybody's going, but not in the same direction.*
    f. Starship: *We set high goals and really take off with our plans. We are capable of finding our way through uncharted territory, solving problems we encounter along the way and bringing back new knowledge.*

Is there anything important that you would like to share about leadership in your school? If yes, please describe briefly:

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part I
# School Climate

*For Middle and High School Students and Staff*

**School Name:**_____

_____**I am a Student:**_____Grade Level
_____Male
_____Female

_____**I am a School Staff Member:**_____Administrator
_____Male
_____Female
_____Teacher
_____Counselor
_____Support Staff

**About School Climate**

"School Climate" refers to how it "feels" to be a student or staff member in the school.

> *"Schools with positive climates are places where people care, respect and trust one another; and where the school, as an institution, cares for, respects, and trusts people. In such a school, people feel a high sense of pride and ownership that comes from each individual having a role in making the school a better place."*
>
> *Eugene Howard*

Everyone has a number of *basic human needs*. These are needs that we are biologically hard-wired to fulfill. The more effectively a school can provide a climate that will help its students meet those needs in a positive way, the more it can help its students be successful, both academically and in their lives. The questions in this survey are grouped according to the basic need areas identified by Karen Pittman (Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment) in her research on positive youth development.

This survey gives you an opportunity to express your opinions about some aspects of the "climate" in your school. This survey includes a number of statements that will provide valuable information for future planning. Your responses are confidential. The results of this survey will be compiled into group responses, with no way to identify an individual's responses. The surveys are numbered to help us with data tracking. No connection will be made or attempted between your responses and your identity. We will protect your confidentiality.

**Instructions for Completing this Survey**

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way things are in your school. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number "1" for "Not Typical." If it happens that way most of the time, circle number "5" for "Very Typical."

| Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Developed by: Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA
In collaboration with: Paul White: Director of Academic Resource Center, Lakeland College, Wisconsin
Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University
SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

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**Safety and Structure:** *Youth need to have a sense of personal safety and protection—both physically and emotionally.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The overall school atmosphere feels: | | | | | |
| a) Safe | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Caring | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. When school staff have a conflict or behavioral problem with a student, they are: | | | | | |
| a) Calm | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Respectful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Students resolve their disputes: | | | | | |
| a) Respectfully | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Peacefully | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. School staff use discipline strategies that promote positive change when there is a behavior problem with a student. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The present discipline system seems fair (not too harsh or too lenient). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Standards for student behavior are clearly communicated to: | | | | | |
| a) Students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) Staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. When the disciplinary code is violated, consequences are enforced consistently for all students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. School staff members help students take responsibility for their behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Adults help make sure that students don't get bullied or harassed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Students having problems in the following areas are quickly given support services: | | | | | |
| a) Academic problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Emotional or behavioral problems (for example, chemical use, aggression, depression, stress) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Belonging and Group Membership:** *Youth need to feel they are valued members of a group; they have a sense of belonging in the school.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. Student concerns are taken seriously by school staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. School is a place where students feel they fit in and "belong." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. There are opportunities for all students who want to participate in extra-curricular/leadership activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Self-Worth and Ability to Contribute:** *Youth need to have a sense of their worth and have opportunities to make meaningful contributions—with their peers, adults, and in their school.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14. Staff believe all students can be successful in school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Students are acknowledged for their success and contributions in many different arenas (for example, academic, service/helping, leadership, talent). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. School staff listen to student ideas and suggestions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Students have opportunities to help others (for example, mentoring, tutoring, community service, peer helping, service learning, mediation) in their: | | | | | |
| a) School | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Community | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Independence and Control:** *Youth need to feel they can make some decisions and have some control over their lives.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. Students participate in making school an inviting place to be (for example, planning displays, painting murals, contributing art work, planting gardens). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Students are given choices regarding learning activities (for example, choice of topic or choice between writing a paper and doing a project, working alone or in a group). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Students have opportunities to participate in decisions about school issues that affect them (for example, discipline policy, extra-curricular activities, leadership). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Closeness and Good Relationships:** *Youth need to experience closeness to other people—relationships that are based upon respect, caring, honesty, and trust.*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 21. All students are treated with *respect* by: | | | | | |
| a) Peers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Staff | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. School staff encourage respect for diversity of all kinds. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Students and staff spend time together outside of academic time in the classrooms (for example, informal activities or conversations, extra-curricular activities). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Students and staff enjoy each other's company. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Every student has at least one adult in school with whom he /she has a "special connection"—a person that student would feel comfortable talking to about problems or asking for help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Competency and Mastery:** *Youth need to develop attitudes, behaviors, and skills in a number of core areas in order to be successful as adults (including social and coping skills as well as academic abilities).*

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. Students are taught and encouraged to use effective social, conflict resolution, and coping skills including: | | | | | |
| a) Respecting diversity (race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, special needs) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Behaving according to a core set of ethics (character education) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) Managing anger | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) Communicating effectively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) Managing stress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) Solving personal problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g) Resolving conflicts with others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Because teachers know that students learn in different ways, they use lots of different strategies (including active student participation) when they teach that help make learning interesting and fun. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Teachers and administrators show that they have high expectations that *all* students can be successful learners by the way they talk and act with students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 29. When students are having trouble with a subject, staff are quick to find a way to help them (for example, spending extra time with them, arranging for tutoring, etc.). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**Conclusion:** Please respond to the following open ended questions.

30. Please look back over the questions in this survey and select up to five that you feel need the most improvement in your school. Record the number of each question below and write any comments you have about your choices in the space below:

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

31. Did we miss something you feel is important that would help improve your school's climate?

32. Is there something especially positive about your school climate you would like to note?

33. Is there anything that has recently happened in your school or community that might be affecting your responses in this survey regarding school climate (for example, a death or other traumatic event, cuts in programs or services, contract changes in school staff)? If yes, please explain.

*If you are a student, please respond to the following final questions.*

34. Which best describes your current status regarding school suspension?

_____I have never been suspended at this school.
_____I have been suspended at this school, but not currently.
_____I am currently serving an in-school suspension.
_____I am currently serving a suspension at another school location.

35. Which best describes your current status regarding school expulsion?

_____I have never been expelled from school.
_____I have been expelled from school, but not currently.
_____I am currently expelled and attending a program at another school.

# Connections Effective Schools Survey: Part III
# **Effective Instruction**
*For Teaching Staff*

**School Name:**_____

**I am:**
_____Male
_____Female

**About Effective Instruction:**

Much has been learned in the past ten years about effective pedagogy and the neuroscience of learning. Through recent technology and research we have a clearer picture of how the brain takes in, encodes, and retrieves information—about things that impede learning and things that stimulate learning. Neuroscience-based learning (i.e., brain-based learning or accelerated learning) is a body of research that can help educators create learning environments that match how our body and brain learn, most naturally. Irrespective of subject matter taught, the use of these effective instructional strategies can help us work *with* the grain of our students' biology instead of *against* it, thus increasing learning while minimizing the behavioral problems that accompany disconnected learners.

Increasing numbers of educators are being trained in brain-based teaching strategies and are discovering their powerful impact as educational tools. There are also educators who have intuitively been drawn to that style of teaching, and have been using these strategies for years. The following questions are intended to help you assess *your* level of use of these research-based strategies that can increase bonding to school, improve behavior, and enhance learning across content areas.

**Instructions for Completing this Survey**

Please read each statement and think about which response you feel best describes the way you do things in *your classroom*. If the behavior described in the statement rarely if ever happens that way, circle number 1 for "Not Typical." If it happens that way most of the time, circle number 5 for "Very Typical."

| Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Developed by: Dee Lindenberger: SAPE Consultant, Marquette-Alger RESA
In collaboration with: Cristal McGill: Impact Teaching, Inc., Consultant/Trainer
Jim O'Neill: Evaluation Consultant, O'Neill Consulting/ Madonna University
SAPE Colleagues (Strategic Alternatives in Prevention Education Association)

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How typical is the use of the following strategies in your classroom? | | | | | |
| a. Music (i.e., use of music as a classroom management tool and to regulate student affect) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Movement (i.e., kinesthetic activities and other opportunities to stand up and move around) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Projects with real life relevance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Experiential activities / simulations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Role plays or dramatizations | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Small group discussions among students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. Cooperative learning opportunities (i.e., positive inter-dependent group learning assignments that include interpersonal/group skills and have a sense of individual and group accountability—"sink or swim together") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. Graphic representations (i.e., having students mentally organize and "manipulate" content into mind maps, drawings, physical models, webs, or charts, kinesthetic representations) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. Art (i.e., activities to stimulate expression and enhance memory) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| j. Stories and metaphors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| k. Reciprocal teaching (i.e., peer-to-peer presentations or interactions to check for understanding and solidify learning) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| l. Social interactions (i.e., participating in mutually enjoyable activities that build relationships and a sense of community) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Students are encouraged to make mental comparisons by asking them to identify similarities and differences with content. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The purpose of learning specific content is clearly conveyed to students in order to create "buy in." | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Instructional feedback to students is "corrective" rather than "punitive" in spirit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Students are given opportunities to give their own feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Problem solving activities and situations are used where students are given opportunities to explain their hypothesis and conclusions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Not Typical | | Somewhat Typical | | Very Typical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. "Higher level" questions are utilized to deepen student learning (i.e., questions that promote critical thinking, such as asking students to analyze errors or perspectives). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Advance organizers are used to provide a "pre-exposure" to new content and to focus attention on key points. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Students are given opportunities to respond to questions designed to stimulate reflection and deepen learning following experiential activities (e.g. simulations, role plays, service activities in and outside of the school). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Unstructured time (before, after, and in between classes) is used as an opportunity to make positive connections with students (e.g., welcoming them, greeting them by name, or otherwise showing an interest in them). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. Please indicate how many days of professional development regarding effective instructional strategies you participated in last year:

_____0 days _____3 - 4 days

_____Less than 1 day _____5 - 6 days

_____1 - 2 days _____More than 6 days (How many?)

Comments:

# Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Karen Clark Salinas, Joyce L. Epstein, & Mavis G. Sanders, Johns Hopkins University,
Deborah Davis & Inge Douglas, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

This instrument is designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement developed by Epstein (1995). At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities or approaches listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. The selected items show that your school is meeting challenges to involve all families in many different ways that will improve the school climate, strengthen families, and increase student success in school. Your school may be conducting other activities for each type of involvement. These may be added and rated to account for all major partnership practices that your school presently conducts.

**Directions:** Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strong and prominent. A score of 1,2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school's program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school's partnership program.

**Scoring Rubric**

1 – **Not Occurring:** Strategy does not happen at our school.

2 – **Rarely:** Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school's parental involvement plan.

3 – **Occasionally:** Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

4 – **Frequently:** Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

5 – **Extensively:** Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis A highly prevalent component of this school's parental involvement plan.

## I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths & talents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools & to help schools to understand families. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other types of activities _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## II. COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and non-print communications. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Develops communication for parents who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs & reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Conducts an orientation for new parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Develops school's plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Trains teachers, staff and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other types of activities _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that effect their children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English language learners. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classroom, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other types of activities _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## IV. LEARNING AT HOME: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| Other types of activities<br>_____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## V. DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organization. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council, improvement team, or other committees. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and committees. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the planning, review, and improvement of programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other group in the school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent representatives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Includes students (along with parents) in decision-making groups. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| Other types of activities<br>_____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

| Our School: | Rating | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Not Occurring | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Extensively |
| 1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Provides "one-stop" shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Opens its building for use by the community after school hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other types of activities<br>_____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

A. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

B. What major factors have limited the success of your school's family and community involvement efforts?

C. What is one of your school's major goals for improving it's program of school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

**References:**

Salinas, K.C., Epstein, J.L. & Sanders, M.G. (1997). Starting points: An inventory of present practices of school-family community partnerships. In J.L. Epstein,.L. Coates, K.C. Salinas, M.G. Sanders, & B.S. Simon. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action* (pp.122-125). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan, (76)*: 701-712.

Yap, K.O. & Enoki, D. (1995) In search of the elusive magic bullet: Parental involvement and student outcomes. *The School Community Journal.* 5(2), Fall/Winter 1995: 97-106.

*Note:* For information on the National Network of Partnership Schools at John Hopkins University, visit the Network's Website: www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000.
For information about NWREL's services, call 1-800-547-6339 ext.568, or access the Website at www.nwrel.org.

# Summary of Meeting Notes

**Date_____**

## Review Meeting Notes from last meeting

How many items were completed from the last meeting's action items. Those remaining attention include:

## Meeting Goals

## Roles: Assign Roles and Determine Rotation for Future Meetings (Who will do what?)

Convener:
Facilitators:
Recorder (computer and easel):
Action Items:
Process Observer:
Timekeeper:

## Present

## New Agenda Items

| Agenda Item | Person (Who put the item on the agenda?) | Time (How much time to allow?) |
|---|---|---|
| Reconnecting (Time to reconnect as individuals/warm up, etc.) | | |
| Meeting Format and Roles (Who will take which roles?) | | |
| Last Meeting's Action Items (Status of last meetings Action Items?) | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Next Meeting's Agenda Items (Save for end of meeting.) | | |
| **Time Required** (Add time requirements above.) | | |

## Additions/Changes to Agenda (Use this space to add last-minute items at meeting.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| **Total Time Required** (Add time requirements from both sections above.) | | |

**Next Meeting Agenda Items:**

- 
- 
- 
- 

**Future Meeting**
**Date**
**Time**
**Location**

**Parking Lot Issues:** (Items that come up but don't really fit with the topic being discussed—a place to "park an idea" until the end of the meeting when a decision is made to either address it then or put it on the next meeting's agenda)

- 
- 
- 

**Process Observer Observations:** (How did the group work together as a team? No names!)

# Action Step Items

| Name | Action Step to Be Completed |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

## Learning Team Meeting Roles

There are a number of roles that provide opportunities for involvement of group members. Roles can assigned at the beginning of each meeting (or the week before) and can be rotated as desired.

1) **Convener:** This generally works best as a permanent role assigned to one person. This person "convenes" the meeting – sends out the meeting notices, gathers input prior to the meeting regarding any agenda items and the length of time needed to address each item, and other tasks related to setting up the meeting. He/she is also responsible for sending out meeting notes after the meeting.

2) **Facilitator:** With groups having adults and students, it works well to use two "co-facilitators" – one adult and one student. The job of facilitator is to help things along through the agendas, refocus if things get off topic or if there are side-bar conversations, summarize (or ask if someone would summarize), etc.

3) **Recorder/s:** Depending upon the needs for each meeting, this may sometimes be a two-person role: One person who serves as the primary recorder to take notes for the meeting (for distribution to the entire group) – and an second person who writes on the board or easel (when brainstorming or organizing information that everyone wants to be able to see). The primary recording role may be permanent, especially if someone has access to a laptop computer and is willing to take notes at each meeting. Having the same person taking notes can ensure consistency getting the information in the proper format from meeting to meeting. However, the person recording on an easel or board can be easily rotated.

4) **Timekeeper:** All items on the agenda will have specified amount of time allotted for discussion. This is determined either at the beginning of the meeting, or when people are submitting ideas for agenda items to the convener prior to the meeting. (This is just a guess on the amount of time needed, and it can be adjusted if the group chooses.) The job of the time-keeper is to let the group know when it is about to run out of the allotted time. If the group still wishes to continue with the topic, the decision is then made how to adjust the schedule to make the extra time available – or the group may decide to put it on as an agenda item to be continued at the next meeting, etc. The point is that conscious decisions are made of where to spend time at the meeting.

5) **Action Item Person:** In the process of the meeting, decisions may be made to *do* something-to "take action" in some way, i.e. "Person X willsend a letterto _____ by____"Each time an action step is identified, this person in this role writes it down (the who, what, and when) on the sheet titled "Action Items" and submits this to the recorder at the end of the meeting. The recorder then writes the action steps in the appropriate section of the notes that are sent out to group members. That provides a neat and tidy list of all action steps that need to be taken as a result of the meeting.

6) **Process Observer:** At the end of the meeting, the facilitator requests the process observer's report. His/her job is to briefly ( 3 min or so) summarize how effectively the group worked together as a team and fulfilled their goals-all without using anyone's names. For example: "There seemed to be a lot of positive energy throughout the meeting. Everyone participated and made contributions. There were a few items we got off topic, but we got through everything we needed to discuss." etc. Having a process observer can help the group identify any group dynamics or "contextual" problems, in a non-threatening way. This is a piece that often gets ignored in groups, I think . . . and can result in the group being much less productive (and fun!) than it could have been.

Each person gets a copy of the format attached. If ideas come up during the course of the meeting that are important, but don't really relate to the topic on the table, the person can jot it down under "Parking Lot Issues." At the end of the meeting, the facilitator can address those, and the group can decide if there is time to address them at that time, or put them on the next meeting's agenda.

This meeting format is extremely effective and fun. It is empowering, gets people involved, keeps a focus and helps things move along efficiently-while allowing more flexibility than Robert's Rules.

NW Regional Educational Laboratory

School Improvement Research Series (SIRS)

*Research You Can Use*

**Topical Synthesis #1**

# Effective Schooling Practices and At-Risk Youth: What the Research Shows

**Greg Druian and Jocelyn A. Butler**

## WHAT IS THE QUESTION?

There is today a growing consensus that the characteristics of effective schools can be identified and described. An emerging question is "How widely can these characteristics be applied?" Recent studies, for instance, cite the efficacy of effective schooling practices with American Indian programs and in Title I programs.

The question of effective, high-quality education means many things to many people--some would like our young people to be better educated in the "basic skills"; others are concerned that schools prepare "technologically literate" youth; and still others want schools to be places where kids learn discipline, citizenship and positive democratic values. while all of these concerns are serious, an even deeper and more pervasive concern is whether we as a nation are going to fulfill the promise that all young people will receive a quality education.

For many researchers, the problem of who will receive an education is as important as the problem of how to bring about excellence in education. Some disturbing findings have surfaced:

- Most experts agree that some 30 percent of youth in school now will drop out prior to graduating.
- There does not at this time appear to be a good definition or even description of who these

youth are. (Mann)
- Based on what is known about the dropout prone, there is every indication that their numbers will increase in coming years.
- Society will need to bear profound economic costs for failing to educate these young persons. (Levin)

Given, however, that we know something about what makes schools effective, it seems worthwhile to ask the question about whether the techniques, processes and procedures which arguably work in schools will also get results with at-risk youth in schools.

The question is urgent for two reasons First, there is the obvious likelihood that the effective schools research will yield knowledge which can be applied in providing quality education to at-risk students. Second, it is equally important to point out that some researchers sound the warning that the effective schools movement itself could constitute a threat to education for at-risk youth if it is not accompanied with supports necessary to accommodate the special needs of those likely to be dropouts (Hamilton 1986; McDill, Natriello and Pallas 1985a, 1985b, 1986; Levin 1986).

Levin (p. 13) puts the matter quite bluntly:

The unique needs of the educationally disadvantaged cannot be fully or effectively addressed by reforms of a general nature, such as increasing course requirements, raising teacher salaries, or increasing the amount of instructional time. While these reforms may be desirable on their own merits, they should not be viewed as a substitute for direct and comprehensive strategies to solve the problems of the disadvantaged. In the absence of specific remedial programs for the disadvantaged, the general reforms may overwhelm the abilities of ever larger numbers of them to meet the requirements for high school completion.

The intention of this paper is to take a first step towards answering the question whether there is a "fit" between techniques shown to be effective with at-risk youth and the conclusions reached by the effective schools researchers. This line of questioning will yield one or two possible answers. First, it is possible that what works for at-risk youth is inconsistent with effective schools findings: there may be a population of youth requiring a "separate" kind of educational experience. The second possibility is that there is substantial overlap between what works with at-risk youth and what works in effective schools: the effective schools research may provide a useful framework for working with students who might otherwise receive poor or no education.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

In recent years, substantial effort has been made to identify characteristics which distinguish effective schools. effective schools are those in which all students master priority objectives. This definition is derived from an extensive review and synthesis of the effective schools research (NWREL 1984), which included examination of research in six areas: school effects, teacher effects, instructional leadership, curriculum alignment, program coupling and educational change and implementation. through the synthesis of this research, major findings were identified about what takes place in classrooms, school buildings and districts that contributes to high levels of student performance.

For the purposes of this paper, the intent is not to provide an exhaustive review of this literature but to indicate key characteristics of effective schools which can be compared with practices that work with at-risk youth. this rich resource base can be organized into three major areas, as follow:

LEADERSHIP: The role of the building principal is to focus the whole school on instruction and use this focus as a means of establishing and acting upon priorities in the school. The principal and all others in the school know the school is a place for learning.

CLIMATE: All staff and all students share the expectation that all students can learn. Effective schools exhibit equity in terms of learning. Learning takes place in a safe, orderly environment, and students are expected to behave according to established, fairly executed rules of conduct.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND MANAGEMENT: All teachers are highly skilled in and use a variety of instructional methods and techniques. there are clear instructional objectives, activities are tied to objectives, and there is frequent monitoring and evaluation of student progress toward those objectives.

## CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

What conditions predict whether a student will be at risk? What conditions predict the likelihood of a student dropping out of school before graduation? What conditions predict whether a student will go through high school having a frustrating and unrewarding time-- regardless of actual graduation?

Researchers have found that it is possible to identify potential dropouts early--as early as elementary school (McDill, Natriello and Pallas 1986). Hodgkinson (p. 12) found in his research a widely held view that "we intervene too late in the course of a student's development, that certain parts of the profile of a dropout-prone student may be visible as early as the third grade."

At the same time, there are a great variety of conditions associated with being at risk. Researchers who have investigated characteristics correlated with a high likelihood of dropping out mention demographic, socioeconomic and institutional characteristics such as:

- Living in high-growth states
- Living in unstable school districts
- Being a member of a low-income family
- Having low academic skills (though not necessarily low intelligence)
- Having parents who are not high school graduates
- Speaking English as a second language
- Being single-parent children
- Having negative self-perceptions; being bored or alienated; having low self-esteem
- Pursuing alternatives: males tend to seek paid work as an alternative; females may leave to have children or get married

One very important aspect of the problem is that it is clear that populations with these characteristics are growing--so that if there is a correlation between population characteristics and being at risk, the situation will in all likelihood worsen.

What is the situation? While the issue with at-risk youth is frequently portrayed as a dropping out issue, it seems that the fact of leaving school prior to graduation is only a symptom. For example, there is evidence that in many schools a "push-out" syndrome exists. Fine (1986) documents how some schools passively allow students to drop out by withholding any effort to retain them or even to find out what the problem is.

Furthermore, it is very easy to confuse "stopping out" (leaving school for another activity) with "dropping out." And finally, who is to say whether dropping out of a poorly supported and/or inadequately staffed school may not leave the student better off in the long run particularly if there are alternatives available. The measure of our dealing adequately with the needs of at-risk youth should not, probably, be numbers of dropouts, but should instead be the kinds of instruction and amounts of learning that take place in the school.

The issue is the kind and quality of learning experienced by the student while in school. When the issue is defined in terms of the experience, it is an issue upon which the school can act. It is therefore interesting to note results of studies of the actual determinants of dropping out.

Data from the "High School and Beyond" study have been carefully analyzed to determine whether there are characteristics which effectively predict whether a youth will become a dropout. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) note that "the most powerful determinants (according to HS&B data) of dropping out are low expectations and low grades combined with disciplinary problems, truancy being the most common offense" (p. 4). They add that while the school can't do much about the socioeconomic factors that are associated with being at risk, the things found to be determinants are things that are very much under the school's control.

These findings are supported by Rock and his colleagues (AASA 1985), who analyzed the same data and found that factors which helped students succeed "have a similar impact on achievement gains for all groups of students, whether white or black, male or female, or enrolled in a public or Catholic school" (p. 63). In other words, school effects are school effects and they have impact on all pupils equally and without regard to socioeconomic conditions.

Rutter, et al. (1979) reached similar conclusions in their study of the effects of schools in London, finding that "children were more likely to show good behavior and good scholastic attainments if they attended some schools than if they attended others" (pp. 177-178). This conclusion was reached after controlling for family background and personal characteristics. In one final study worth mentioning, Sexton (1985) found that students transferring from a school with a high dropout rate to another with a lower dropout rate reflected the lower rate in the extent to which they actually left school.

It is probably important to distinguish between social characteristics of at-risk youth and the conditions in schools which inhibit or fail to bring about learning. It is becoming increasingly clear that at-risk youth are those who attend certain types of schools-- specifically schools with little support, which promote low expectations and which have little or no curriculum focus.

## SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

The title of this section should probably include the phrase "and how do we know?" Hodgkinson

(1985), for instance, believes that a great deal is being done, but it is not widely shared and is not well publicized. He asserts that "many localities, however, have developed excellent drop-out prevention programs" and there is a "major need to coordinate and share information on what works and why." He notes that successful programs "combine intensive, individualized training in the basic skills with work-related projects" and finds that "when the relation between education and work becomes clear, most of these potential drop-outs can be motivated to stay in school and perform at a higher level" (p. 12).

Green and Baker (1986) report on a literature search and on heir questionnaire survey of initiatives for high-risk youth in the Pacific Northwest states. They find that much, indeed, seems to be underway, but that practitioners do not share a common taxonomy or framework for discussing and sharing what they are doing.

Hamilton (1986), reviewing the ERIC index, found "a surprisingly small number of reports and only a few (with) both program descriptions and data indicating program effectiveness." He was, however, able to find that successful programs seemed to exhibit these characteristics (p. 410):

- Dropouts are separated from other students
- The programs have strong vocational components
- Out-of-classroom learning is utilized
- Programs tend to be intensive--small, individualized with low student-teacher ratios--and tend to offer more counseling that the regular school curriculum.

In the review undertaken for this paper, findings are grouped into three categories: large, federally funded programmatic efforts; pull-out programs; and classroombased studies.

## FEDERALLY FUNDED STUDIES

In one of the greatest evaluation efforts ever undertaken in support of a social experiment, a huge "knowledge development" component was made part of the Labor Department's Youth Employment Demonstration Projects Act (YEDPA) in the late 1970s and early 19;80s. An enormous amount of information was generated by projects funded under this program. In general, it can be said that the research supported the hypothesis that paid work experience tended to help enable low-income youth to remain in school longer. While the school curriculum often benefited from additional resources, especially resources related to career skills, these were normally not permanent additions and were not always available to all students. Three features of these efforts are notable: first, participants were generally required to develop a "career plan"; second, there was a conscious effort to build the program around competencies to be attained by participants; and third, in many of the programs, participants were provided with services, where possible, which would enable them to stay a part of the program.

Experienced-Based Career Education (EBCE) is a programmatic effort that differs from some others in that, in many cases, it attempts to be tightly interwoven into the school curriculum instead of added to it. Extensive evaluation of EBCE found that students participating in it performed at least as well (or no worse) on standardized measures of academic learning than nonparticipants.

## PULL-OUT PROGRAMS

Wehlage (1983 analyzes several programs that successfully involve marginal students in school work and try to keep them in school. His analysis cuts across a breadth of school contexts, and he finds that alienation from the school, daily reinforced by teachers and administrators, is one of the most important threats to the retention of at-risk youth. He asks, "When otherwise normal adolescents who have sufficient intelligence to succeed in school. . .become alienated and reject the school, should not educators attempt to find ways to respond constructively to this significant portion of their clientele?" (p. 16)

Wehlage's answer is that educators unequivocally can make a difference--that teachers and administrators can develop ways to retain at-risk youth and involve them in learning. He criticizes programs which stress only "basic skills" or "vocational education" or "career education" alone as being too narrow in focus and thus of limited value. He argues that schools must provide young people with experiences of success in order to counteract the messages of failure he finds these young people are constantly receiving. He argues further that we reinforce the message of failure by not expecting enough from the marginal student--we tend to place these students in "slow" classes and to deny them access to challenging experiences. Indeed, the failure to develop appropriately challenging experiences for these students is one of Wehlage's major criticisms of public schools. He would have schools stress the development of abstract thinking (in the Piagetan sense) and the development of social skills.

In the six effective programs which he outlines, he finds that there are several characteristics of effective programs. First, there is the group of **ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS** common among successful programs. Small size allows attention to individual needs of students through frequent face-to-face interactions and monitoring. Program autonomy allows teachers the flexibility to respond quickly. Decision making authority gives teachers a sense of empowerment, which in turn heightens their commitment to the program.

Next, characteristics grouped under TEACHER CULTURE refer to the sense of professional accountability for program success and the optimism/confidence teachers have in the program, the extended role of the teacher in dealing with the "whole student" which creates in students a sense that they are cared for, and the sense of collegiality which binds together the team of teachers working in the program.

A third set of characteristics is called STUDENT CULTURE. As Wehlage says, "The single most valued characteristic of the programs is the ‘family atmosphere'" (p. 36). Wehlage reports that successful programs do not suppress criticism but instead provide a positive and constructive atmosphere in which criticism can occur. Another characteristic of student culture is cooperative learning, where help may be obtained from other students or teachers and where team learning takes place.

Wehlage finds that the most important curricular characteristics of effective programs for at-risk students is the experiential curriculum. He makes the very important point that a fundamental difference between experiential programs and work/vocational programs is that the latter tend to focus on monetary rewards and to offer less opportunity for students to take challenging roles and opportunities. Experiential activities, on the other hand, offer possibilities for maximizing adolescent development that are important. Wehlage says, "We believe there is sufficient evidence about the effects of experiential education (that meet the criteria below) to argue for it as an ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF AND PROGRAM FOR MARGINAL STUDENTS" (author's emphasis).

The criteria for experiential education are that the program:

- Should offer "optimal challenge with manageable conflict"
- Should provide a young person an opportunity to exercise initiative and responsibility
- Should provide the young person with a task that has integrity (i.e., is not "make-work") and thus reinforces the person's sense of dignity
- Should provide the young person with a "sense of competence and success"
- Must engage the student in reflection about his/her experiences (pp. 38-40).

## CLASSROOM-BASED STUDIES

A third kind of study seeks to identify whether there are schools successfully working with dropout-prone students and if so, to describe the techniques they use. Edmonds (1979) is unequivocal in his assertion that "all children are eminently educable and that the behavior of the school is critical in determining the quality of that education." Both in his own research on schools serving the urban poor and in his review of similar research undertaken by others, he finds that there are indeed effective schools which demonstrate these characteristics:

- Strong administrative leadership
- A climate of expectation in which "no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement"
- An orderly, but not rigid, atmosphere that is "conducive to the instructional business at hand"
- An attitude which makes it clear that "pupil acquisition of the basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities"
- The ability to divert resources "from other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives" when necessary
- Means for frequent monitoring of pupil progress, specifically, means "by which the principal and the teachers remain constantly aware of pupil progress in relationship to instructional objectives."

A somewhat different tack is taken by McDill, Natriello and Pallas (1986), who have synthesized an extensive number of research studies and evaluation efforts in an attempt to examine the potential consequences of tougher school standards on students who are at risk of dropping out. Their work is included in this section because they also focus on classroom-based research. They examine first the possible positive consequences and then the possible negative consequences.

The nub of the question is whether increased standards will make it even harder for at-risk student to succeed in school. On the positive side, when students are confronted with challenging standards, they are more likely to pay attention in class and spend time on homework. In the studies they cite, class cutting is notably higher in classes which put a low demand on students than in classes with higher demands. These findings hold for students of all abilities. In general McDill et al. conclude that "results in several different lines of research provide hope that raising standards will lead students to work somewhat harder, at least when standards are originally quite low, and that greater student effort will lead to somewhat higher student achievement" (p. 149).

Nevertheless, there must come a point where expectations are too high for some students to succeed without additional assistance of some kind. The potential negative effects are 1) that

greater academic stratification will occur and student will have fewer choices available to them; and 2) more demanding time requirements on the part of schools will conflict with other demands on students.

These researchers focus on "alterable characteristics in schools" to minimize the risk of unwanted effects. They note that size of the school is one of the most important factors associated with having fewer disorders, higher achievement, higher levels of student participation and more feelings of satisfaction with school (p. 157).

Other factors include an INDIVIDUALIZED CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH; CLIMATE, which is concerned with matters of governance (the importance of clear rules consistently enforced); the system of academic REWARDS (they note that researchers "have found it useful to employ a variety of alternative, detailed reward systems such as learning contracts, token economies and grading systems that base evaluation on individual effort and progress" [p. 159]; and NORMATIVE EMPHASIS ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. Finally, at the classroom level, these researchers assert that a CLEAR ORIENTATION TO WORK AND LEARNING in the classroom is essential before approaches such as individualized instruction can succeed. they also assert that without the orientation to learning, even the best teachers will be unlikely to succeed in positively affecting the dropout prone.

**COMMONALITIES**

The primary characteristic of successful programs for at-risk youth seems to be a STRONG, EVEN INTENSE, LEVEL OF COMMITMENT on the part of the instructional staff. As with effective schools, where the principal is active in the day-to-day operation of the instructional program, the leader takes a strong interest in the operation of the program; traditional roles and role relationships are not as important as taking the proper action to achieve school/program goals. In both cases, there is a clear belief that students will succeed.

Evaluation of programs consistently mentions STRONG LEADERSHIP as one of the factors contributing most to their success. Of course it may well be that leadership emerges more easily in the context of a program or, more likely perhaps, that without strong leadership , there wouldn't have been a program in the first place. The point seems to be, however, that it is the quality of the leadership rather than the fact of the program, that makes for success. The policy consequences might well be consideration of ways of developing leadership instead of ways of developing the programs.

Finally, it should be noted that one of the strongest criticisms of schools made by dropouts is that the discipline is unfair and arbitrary. Successful programs that serve dropouts are characterized as having fair--though sometimes tough--programs of discipline. The programs clarify what offenses are and what the punishment is.

Differences between techniques used to serve at-risk youth and techniques in effective schools have to do with the types of goals which are pursued and not the manner in which they are pursued. At the secondary level, the most important characteristic of programs serving at-risk youth is indeed that they are programs; the ones reviewed in this paper are pull-out programs. It may well be that the only way in which certain youth in certain schools can be reached at all is to take them completely out of the school context and build a program minus the added burden of overcoming the residue of bad feelings toward s the school they may have built up.

Practitioners who work with at-risk youth, however, might consider whether there is more instructional value in shaping experiences in which at-risk pupils interact with other pupils. For instance, Ward (1986) notes that cooperative learning groups (small groups of students with diverse backgrounds working on common tasks) "produce significant gains in academic achievement for minority students" (in desegregated classrooms) (p.6). The fact of a pull-out program seems to limit what can be achieved with grouping.

The fact that at-risk youth are served by programs rather than through an effort on the part of the school to meet the needs of these youth has another consequence. The curriculum, even in successful programs, tends to be limited and to track students into fairly narrow channels. Although it would be hard to pinpoint, the assumption seems to be made that atrisk students need a career-oriented education focused generally on nonprofessional occupations. The point is not whether this is appropriate or not for all or even any of these students, but rather that the students do not seem to have a choice. Indeed, the question of limited curriculum never seems to arise, perhaps because more fundamental needs are being met.

On the other hand, many successful programs for at-risk youth make use of their autonomy to develop very rich curricular offerings, particularly in the area of experiential learning. The benefits of this type of learning may well be something that deserves investigation by effective schools researchers. Levin calls attention to peer teaching and cooperative learning as "two approaches that seem to work particularly well for disadvantaged students" (p. 15).

Another consequence of the fact that the needs of atrisk youth are served primarily by programs is that it may be difficult to decide where the program stops. Indeed the temptation is to develop a comprehensive program, one which owning to the special needs of the population to be served, may require components which go far beyond the capacity of the school itself to implement or be responsible for. For instance, Levin (p. 13) asserts that the major components of a strategy to solve the problems of disadvantaged students would have to include:

- Providing enriched preschool experiences
- Improving the effectiveness of the home as a learning environment
- Improving the effectiveness of the school for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged
- Assisting those from linguistically different backgrounds to acquire skills in standard English.

## RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RESEARCH ON AT-RISK YOUTH AND EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

An examination of both sets of research suggests that there may be value in applying effective schooling practices to at-risk youth. Successful programs for at-risk youth. Successful programs for at-risk youth in fact reflect the use of effective practice. Within the parameters of the programs, for example, there is strong leadership to support and guide instructional priorities. All students must meet clear expectations for academic performance and behavior, and there is frequent monitoring of student progress and support for success.

In terms of at-risk students as part of the general student population, there are other factors from the effective schooling research which may be valuable (Figure 1):

Figure 1

**AT-RISK RESEARCH**

- Separate low expectations
- Need for success
- Lack of consistent discipline
- No teacher involvement, accountability
- Lack of attention to needs of individual
- Lack of engagement in learning

**EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING RESEARCH**

- High expectations for all
- Clear, achievable goals
- Clear rules for behavior, fairly enforced
- Effective instruction and classroom management
- Careful monitoring of student progress
- Emphasis that school is place for learning

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- At-risk youth are often channeled to programs with special, reduced expectations for performance, especially academic performance. The effective schools research strongly supports that schools establish and maintain high expectations and standards for all students and focus on helping them all meet those expectations.
- At-risk youth exhibit a lack of and strong need for success. With clear goals and objectives recommended by the effective schools research, at-risk youth can move toward and achieve measurable success in school.
- Lack of consistency in discipline often contributes to the problems of at-risk youth who may be, in effect, penalized for being at risk. The effective schools research supports the establishment and maintenance of clear rules for behavior of all students, with behavior measured against the standards, not against previous behavior or behaviors of other students, and with rules enforced fairly and equitably for all.
- A problem in schools with high at-risk populations is the decline of teacher involvement and/or accountability for the performance of these students. The use of effective classroom instruction and management techniques, with emphasis on teacher responsibility and expectation that all students can and will learn, may counteract this teacher withdrawal.
- There if often a lack of attention to the needs of individual at-risk students. Effective schooling research supports the careful monitoring of all students' progress with interventions to improve student learning.
- At-risk youth are often characterized by a lack of engagement in learning. The effective schools research emphasizes holding the expectation that all students are involved in their own learning and that all students understand and respect the fact that school is a place dedicated to learning.

The accumulated knowledge of alternative programs for at-risk young people seems to support substantially the findings and recommendations of the effective schools researchers. Where the differences lie seem principally to concern curriculum goals or purposes of education.

Nonetheless, given the set of goals professed by each "side," the means of attaining them show great congruence. The conclusion to which this analysis seems to point can be summed up in the words of Ronald Edmonds (1979, p. 23):

(a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.

## ANNOTATED SOURCE LIST

Batsche, Catherine, et al. INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION SKILLS AMONG DROPOUTS. Normal, IL: Illinois State University, June 1984. (ED 246 235)

> The writers examine vocational programs to find out what works to increase retention of high school dropouts. The most interesting finding in this study is that students rated two factors very highly--support from other students and financial aid--which were rated low by administrators.

Edmonds, Ronald. "Effective Schools for the Urban Poor." EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, 15-24, October 1979.

Fine, Michelle. "Why Urban Adolescents Drop Into and Out of Public High School." TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD, 393-409, Spring 1986.

Good, Thomas L. and Jere E. Brophy. LOOKING IN CLASSROOMS. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.

> Chapter 4, "Teacher Expectations," presents persuasive evidence of the influence of a teacher's expectations on pupil performance; these effects occur regardless of the pupil's background or SES.

Green, Karen Reed and Baker, Andrea. PROMISING PRACTICES FOR HIGH RISK YOUTH IN THE NORTHWEST REGION: INITIAL SEARCH. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, June 1986.

> The authors review national studies as well as studies and programs from the Northwest Region. They find that while most of what is considered "effective" or "promising"" is a matter of expert testimony, as opposed to carefully designed research, common threads of successful programs usually involve staffing, methodology, curriculum and administrative support.

Hamilton, Stephen F. "Raising Standards and Reducing the Dropout Rate." In "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies," TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD, 410-429, Spring 1986.

> This careful and sensitive article explores issues related to the effect that raising

standards could have on dropout rates in secondary schools. He finds promise in recent research which suggests that the classroom might not be the best environment for learning.

Hodgkinson, Harold L. ALL ONE SYSTEM: DEMOGRAPHICS OF EDUCATION, KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc., 1985.

A somewhat comprehensive exposition of his theories about how demographic changes will affect the continuum of education; he argues very persuasively that demographic trends will force the educational system to confront squarely the issue of high risk youth.

Levin, Henry M. EDUCATIONAL REFORM FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS: AN EMERGING CRISIS. (NEA Search). Washington, DC: National Education Association, 1986.

Mann, Dale. "Dropout Prevention--Getting Serious About Programs that Work." NAASP BULLETIN, 66-73, April 1986.

Mann finds that schools are "doing a lot and learning a little" in dealing with dropouts; he calls for an effort to analyze carefully what is being done to whom, and with what effect.

McDill, Edward L; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "Raising Standards and Retaining Students: The Impact of the Reform Recommendations on Potential Dropouts." Baltimore, MD: Center for Social Organization of Schools, The Johns Hopkins University, Report No. 358, April 1985. (Reprinted in slightly revised form in REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH 55:4, 415-433, Winter 1985.)

This closely argued paper draws extensively on available research to examine possible positive and possible negative impacts of recent reform recommendations. They conclude that the challenge of educators is to find ways to provide the support that potential dropouts will need to successfully meet heightened standards.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "Uncommon Sense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts." Prepared for presentation at the National Invitational Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts, Teachers College, Columbia University, February 1985. (ED 257 927)

This paper presents possible positive and negative impacts of school reform. It focuses specifically on possible roles for the school administrator in maximizing the effect on potential dropouts.

McDill, Edward L.; Natriello, Gary and Pallas; Aaron, M. "A Population at Risk: Potential Consequences of Tougher School Standards for Student Dropouts." AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION 94:2, 135-181, February 1986.

The researchers spell out and justify a research agenda focusing on monitoring the impact of programs with New Standards, determine school characteristics associated

with successful education of at-risk students, provide students with services and flexible time options, and maintain high standards for all students.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLING PRACTICES: A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS. Portland, OR: NWREL, 1984.

A synthesis of effective schools research describing practices that contribute to high levels of student performance. Practices are arranged into classroom, school and district levels.

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. THE NORTHWEST REPORT. Portland, OR: NWREL, July/August 1986.

This issue reviews a new publication, the "Effective Compensatory Education Sourcebook: (Griswold, Cotton and Hansen), which finds that program effectiveness in Chapter 1 schools--in terms of student achievement, attendance rates and parent support--is tied to the implementation of effective schooling practices.

O'Connor, Patrick. "Dropout Prevention Programs that Work." OSSC BULLETIN 29:4, December 1985.

This paper is aimed at the practitioner and attempts to synthesize findings from research and ongoing programs.

Pine, Patricia. RAISING STANDARDS IN THE SCHOOLS: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. (AASA Critical Issues Report) Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1985.

Rutter, Michael, et al. FIFTEEN THOUSAND HOURS. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. Sexton, Porter W. "Trying to Make It Real Compared to What: Implications of High School Dropout Statistics." JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND LEADERSHIP 5:2, 92- 106, Summer 1985.

In this article, the author presents his provocative findings that at-risk students who change schools are likely to reflect the dropout patterns of their new school instead of their old school. This thesis supports the notion that school expectations play a critical role in student success.

Squires, David A: Huitt, William G. and Segars, John K. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS: A RESEARCH-BASED PERSPECTIVE, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Chapter 4, "Effective Schools: What Research Says," examines factors determined by research to be characteristics of effective schools. Several studies are reviewed, and they are fairly unanimous in reporting the importance of student engagement, student success, teacher management of instruction and supervision by the principal as critical elements in effective schools.

TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD. "School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies: (Special Issue) 87:3, Spring 1986.

This collection of articles examines dropout patterns among American youth and policies which have been developed to reduce the number of dropouts. While the authors represent a breadth of viewpoints, they seem to agree that 1) success in the area is possible, and 2) a substantial amount of further research in the area is necessary.

Ward, Beatrice A. INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING IN THE CLASSROOM. Portland, OR: Goal Based Education Program, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, July 1986.

Describes how instructional grouping can be used (and how it should not be used) to promote learning in the classroom.

Wehlage, Gary G. "Effective Programs for the Marginal High School Student." PDK FASTBACK 197. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1983.

Wehlage cites six effective programs and elicits characteristics of an effective antidropout program. This paper is notable for both the power of the writer's argument and for the confidence he has that excellent programs for the dropout prone can be developed. The paper is full of suggestions for the practitioner.

Wehlage, Gary G. and Rutter, Robert A. EVALUATION OF MODEL PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA, 1986.

This paper presents a model program for at-risk students and evaluative evidence in support of the claim that it has positive effects on them.

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# Hardwired to Connect:
# The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities




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For Release on Sept. 9, 2003

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Major New Report:

## Hardwired to Connect:
## The New Scientific Case for Authoritative Communities

New Scientific Findings Shed Light on Why Large Numbers of American Children Suffer from Emotional and Behavioral Problems

*Symposium to discuss report's findings on Tuesday, September 9 (Dirksen SOB, Room G50, Washington, D.C., begins 9:00 a.m) – speakers include U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona, U.S. Assistant Secretary of HHS Dr. Wade Horn.*

The Commission on Children at Risk, a panel of leading children's doctors, research scientists and youth service professionals, has issued a report to the nation about new strategies to reduce the currently high numbers of U.S. children who are suffering from emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders, and thoughts of suicide. The Commission is basing its recommendations on recent scientific findings suggesting that children are biologically "hardwired" for enduring attachments to other people and for moral and spiritual meaning." Meeting children's needs for enduring attachments and for moral and

spiritual meaning is the best way to ensure their healthy development, according to the Commission's report.

Said Dr. Kenneth L. Gladish, the National Executive Director, YMCA of the USA:

> "The basic conclusion of this report is that children are hardwired for close connections to others and for moral and spiritual meaning. The report challenges all of us to strengthen those groups in our society that promote this type of connectedness. Here at the Y, we have been working for children and families since 1851 and we intend to be a part of that solution."

The Commission on Children at Risk is sponsored by YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School and the Institute for American Values. Commission members include **Steven Suomi** of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, **T. Berry Brazelton**, Harvard Medical School, **Allan Schore** of UCLA Medical School, **Alvin Poussaint** of Harvard Medical School, **Robert Coles** of Harvard Medical School; **James P. Comer** of Yale Medical School; the developmental psychobiologist **Linda Spear** of Binghamton University; the author and clinical psychologist **Judith Wallerstein** of the Center for the Family in Transition; and **Thomas Insel**, who was at Emory University at the time of the study, but has recently been appointed director of the National Institute of Mental Health.

Despite a decade of unprecedented economic growth that resulted in fewer children living in poverty, large and growing numbers of American children and adolescents are suffering from mental health problems. Scholars at the National Research Council in 2002 estimated that at least one of every four adolescents in the U.S. is currently at serious risk of not achieving productive adulthood. Twenty-one percent of U.S. children ages 9 to 17 have a diagnosable mental disorder or addiction; 8 percent of high school students suffer from clinical depression, and 20 percent of students report seriously having considered suicide in the past year. By the 1980s, U.S. children as a group were reporting more anxiety than did children who were psychiatric patients in the 1950s, according to one study.

The Commission is calling upon all U.S. citizens to help strengthen what it calls "authoritative communities" as likely to be the best strategy for improving children's lives, in its report, *Hardwired to Connect: The Case for Authoritative Communities*. Authoritative communities are groups of people who are committed to one another over time and who exhibit and are able to pass on what it means to be a good person. These groups provide the types of connectedness our children increasingly lack. Authoritative communities can be families with children and all civic, educational, recreational, community service, business, culture, and religious groups that serve or include persons under the age of 18 that exhibit certain characteristics. These characteristics are: 1) it is a social institution that includes children and youth; 2) it treats children as ends in themselves; 3) it is warm and nurturing; 4) it establishes clear boundaries and limits; 5) it is defined and guided at least partly by non-specialists; 6) it is multi-generational; 7) it has a long-term focus; 8) it encourages spiritual and religious development; 9) it reflects and transmits a shared understanding of what it means to be a good person; 10) it is philosophically oriented to the equal dignity of all persons and to the principle of love of neighbor.

The Commission's report represents the first time that neuroscientists have collaborated with social scientists who study civil society to improve outcomes for children. It is also represents the first time that a diverse group of scientists and leading children's doctors are publicly recommending that our society pay considerably more attention to young people's moral and spiritual needs.

Said the child psychiatrist Dr. Kathleen Kovner Kline of the Dartmouth Medical School, the report's principal investigator:

> "As children's doctors, we began this project because our waiting lists are too long. Our challenge today is to shift from treatment alone to treatment plus prevention. Broad social changes are required. We need to become environmental advocates for childhood."

The report and its recommendations will be discussed at a symposium, involving youth service professionals from around the country and others, starting at 9:00 a.m. on September 9 in the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G50 (corner 1st and C Streets, N.E., Washington, D.C.).

Scheduled speakers include the U.S. Surgeon General, Vice Admiral **Richard H. Carmona**; the Assistant Secretary for Families and Children at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Dr. **Wade Horn**; Dr. **Stephen Suomi** of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; Dr. **Kenneth L. Gladish**, the National Executive Director of the YMCA of the USA; the report's Principal Investigator, Dr. **Kathleen Kovner Kline** of the Dartmouth Medical School; and other members of the Commission on Children at Risk.

**What Recent Research Suggests**

In searching for strategies to improve outcomes for children, the Commission reviewed research on the brain and human behavior from the last two to five years. Among the main scientific findings on which the Commission has based its recommendations are:

- The mechanisms by which we become and stay attached to others have a biological basis and are increasingly discernible in the basic structure of the brain.
- Nurturing environments, or the lack of them, influence the development of brain circuitry and the way genes affect behavior.
- The old "nature versus nurture" debate – focusing on whether heredity or environment is the main determinant of human conduct – is no longer relevant to serious discussions of child well-being and youth programming. New scientific findings are teaching us to marvel at how nature and nurture interact. These findings suggest that strong nurturing can reduce or eliminate the harmful effects of genes that are associated with aggression, anxiety, depression or substance abuse.
- Primary nurturing relationships influence early spiritual development, and spiritual development can influence us biologically in the same ways that primary nurturing relationships do. For instance, spirituality and religiosity can be associated with

lower levels of stress hormone (cortisol), more optimism, and commitment to helping others.
- Religiosity and spirituality significantly influence well-being.
- The human brain appears to be organized to ask ultimate questions and seek ultimate answers.

These findings are described in detail in the attached copy of the Commission's report.

**Hardwired to Connect**

The Commission was particularly impressed by mounting scientific evidence suggesting that in two basic ways the human child is hardwired to connect. First, children are hardwired for close attachments to other people, beginning with their mothers, fathers, and other relatives, and then extending out to the broader community.

Recent animal studies show that our ability and need to become and stay attached to others is biologically "programmed" and increasingly discernible in the basic structure of the brain. For instance, recent animal studies have shown the role the neuropeptides, oxytocin and vasopressin in male-female bonding. In the area of parental care, in several animal species it has been shown that attachment hormones help to trigger parental care, which in turn helps to trigger the release of more attachment hormones. For example, as male marmosets begin to care for their offspring, their levels of prolactin increase, which likely reinforces the bonding process. Other studies implicate numerous other neurotransmitters and hormones in the human bonding process.

Recent animal studies are also underscoring the powerful effects of strong nurturing on genetic transcription and brain circuitry, improving outcomes for offspring and helping in ways that are measurable at the cellular level. Animal studies show that high levels of maternal stimulation can change brain functioning and reduce genetic risks for anxiety, aggression, depression and substance abuse in infant animals. It can even turn genetic risks into an advantage.

Steve Suomi of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and member of the Commission has done extensive research with rhesus monkeys showing how nurturing and genes interact. He has found that strong mothering not only eliminates the negative impact of risky genes, it even appears that it can turn certain of those genes into an advantage.

For instance, in some rhesus monkeys, a variation in one of their genes seems to predispose them towards aggression and poor impulse control. These aggressive monkeys also drink a lot of alcohol at monkey happy hour, and they are more likely than other monkeys to engage in "binge drinking." Typically, these aggressive young monkeys are not well-liked or accepted by the other monkeys. But when these genetically "at risk" monkeys are raised in supportive environments, the harmfully aggressive behavior disappears, as does the excessive and binge drinking. But there is more. These potentially "at risk" monkeys not only survive. They flourish. They do very well. They appear to be especially successful in making their way to or near the

top of the rhesus monkey social hierarchy. What has happened? An improved social environment has changed an inherited vulnerability into a positive behavioral asset.

**Hardwired for Meaning**

A smaller but still significant body of research also shows that people are "hardwired" for meaning, born with a built-in capacity and drive to ask the ultimate questions about life's purpose: Why am I here? What is the purpose of my life? How should I live? What will happen when I die? Across time and cultures, this distinctively human pursuit has been closely connected to spiritual seeking and experience and to religious belief and practice. Using brain imaging, neuroscientists Eugene dAquili and Andrew B. Newberg's have found that the same part of the brain that underlies the human need to seek answers to what is true about life's deepest questions also underlies many spiritual and religious experiences. In other words, the pursuit of meaning appears to be physiologically linked to spiritual and religious seeking.

To date the influence of religion on U.S. young people has been "grossly understudied," according to Byron Johnson of the University of Pennsylvania. However, existing research is highly suggestive. For adolescents, religiosity is significantly associated with a reduced likelihood of both unintentional and intentional injury (both of which are leading causes of death for teenagers. Homicides, suicides and accidents account for 85 percent of all deaths among early to late adolescents). Religious teenagers are safer drivers and are more likely to wear seatbelts than their less religious peers. They are less likely to become juvenile delinquents or adult criminals. They are less prone to substance abuse. They are less likely to endorse engaging in high-risk behavior or the idea of enjoying danger.

On the positive side of the coin, religiously committed teenagers are more likely to volunteer in the community, to participate in sports and student government, to have high self-esteem and more positive attitudes about life. Much of this research is based on large national studies.

One religious quality that appears to be especially beneficial, in terms of mental health and lifestyle consequences, is what some scholars call personal devotion, or the young person's sense of participating in a "direct personal relationship with the Divine." Personal devotion among adolescents in associated with reduced risk-taking, more effectively resolving feelings of loneliness, greater regard for self and for others, and a stronger sense that life has meaning and purpose. These protective effects of personal devotion are twice as great for adolescents as they are for adults. This last finding clearly reinforces the idea, found in many cross-national studies, that adolescence is a time of particularly intense searching for, and openness to, the transcendent. Here is how Lisa Miller of Columbia University puts it: "A search for spiritual relationship with the Creator may be an inherent developmental process in adolescence."

For this reason, the Commission is recommending that our society as a whole, and youth advocates and youth service professionals in particular, should pay greater attention to this aspect of youth development. This task will not be easy, the Commission's warns in its report. Because we are a philosophically diverse and religiously plural society, many

of our youth-serving programs and social environments for young people will need to find ways respectfully to reflect that diversity and pluralism. But that is a challenge to be embraced, not avoided. One of the many problems with the avoidance strategy is that denying or ignoring the spiritual needs of adolescents may end up creating a void in their lives that either devolves into depression or is filled by other forms of questing and challenge, such as drinking, unbridled consumerism, petty crime, sexual precocity, or flirtations with violence.

**The Link Between Social Connectedness and Child Well-being**

In recent years, authoritative communities have gotten significantly weaker in the United States. Consider the family, for children, the first and typically most important authoritative community. From the mid 1960s to the mid 1990s, U.S. families overall have gotten steadily weaker. Today, more than half of all children in the U.S. will spend a significant part of their childhood in a single-parent home, usually a father-absent home, due to high rates of divorce and unmarried childbearing. One particularly harmful aspect of this trend is the widespread absence of fathers in children's lives.

Today there is also a rough scholarly consensus that other authoritative communities, such as civic and community groups, houses of worship, political clubs, and workplace associations have deteriorated significantly in recent decades.

The idea that the decline in social connectedness is contributing significantly to a range of childhood problems is supported by numerous studies. For instance, a recent analysis of 269 studies, dating back to the 1950s, links steady increases in self-reported anxiety and depression among U.S. young people primarily to the decline of "social connectedness." A major population-based study from Sweden – that is, a study focusing on all Swedish children – concludes that children living in one-parent homes have more than double the risk of psychiatric disease, suicide or attempted suicide, and alcohol-related disease, and more than three times the risk of drug-related disease, compared to Swedish children living in two-parent homes. These findings emerge after the scholars controlled for a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic variables.

The Swedish study is important not only because of its large scale and rigorous controls, but also because Sweden has long been a world leader in developing social policies that ameliorate the economic and material consequences of growing up in one-parent homes. As a result, the higher rates of mental and emotional problems experienced by Swedish children in one-parent homes would appear less likely to stem solely or even primarily from economic circumstances. Obviously the lack of money can be a critical problem. But another obviously important – and partially independent – problem is the fracturing of the child's primary authoritative community.

In 1999, the prominent sociologist Robert Putnam and his colleagues carried out a small but fascinating experiment reported in Putnam's book, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, to test the hypothesis that higher levels of social connectedness mean better outcomes for children and youth. Putnam and his colleagues developed a list of fourteen leading indicators of social connectedness, which they called the Social Capital Index, and applied it on a state-by-state basis. He then

compared the Annie E. Casey Foundation's state rankings on child well-being with his own state rankings for social connectedness. He found that: "Statistically, the correlation between high social capital and positive child development is as close to perfect as social scientists ever find in data analyses of this sort." This robust correlation held true even after Putnam controlled for a range of socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

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